The bride of the Nile

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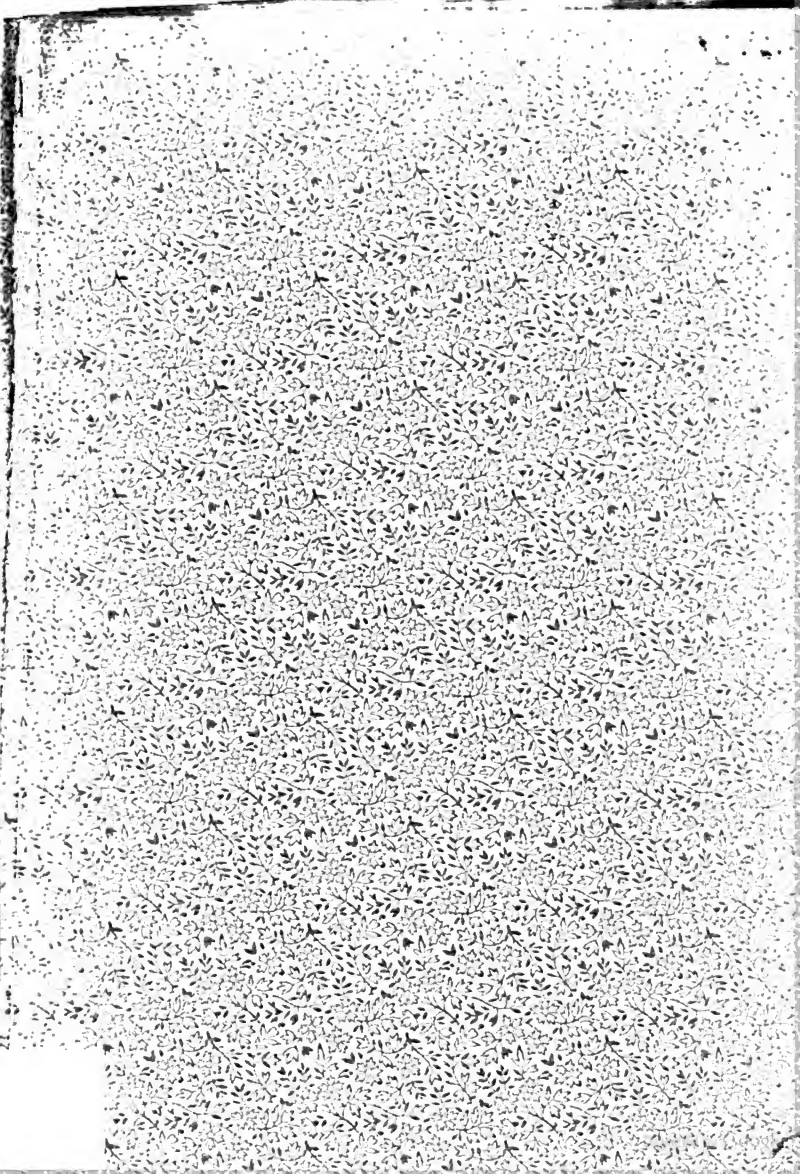

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THE

BRIDE OF THE NILE.

By GEORGE EBERS,

Author of "An Egyptian Princess." "Uarda," "The Emperor," "The Burgomaster's Wife."

TRANSLATED BY MARY STUART SMITH AND GESSNER HARRISON SMITH, M.A.

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PREFACE.

"THE BRIDE OF THE NILE" needs no preface. Only for professional associates have I to remark that I have been encouraged by the opinion of the excellent De Goeje to adhere to my own supposition that the word *mukaukas* stands not for the name but the title of the man whom the Arabic authorities that I have had to consult designate as the one who, as vicegerent of the Byzantine emperor, delivered over to the Moslem power the province which had been intrusted to his charge. The researches dedicated to the Mukaukas by C. Karabacex, unfortunately for me, were no longer available.

I shall be blamed, with justice, for transplanting the old Horus Apollo (Horapollo) into the seventh century by every one who regards the composer of the "Hieroglyphica" as identical with the Egyptian scholar of the same name, who, according to Suidas, lived under Theodosius, and who is already mentioned by Stephen of Byzantium at the close of the fifth century. And yet the first-named lexicographer, Suidas, enumerates the works of the grammarian and commentator on the Greek writers Horapollo without mentioning the "Hieroglyphica," with which only we are here concerned, and all the other ancients who take note of Horapollo's name (as does C. Leemans too, the greatest adept in hieroglyphical lore) allow us full liberty to accept two Horapollos, the second of whom may well have lived in the seventh century, since in his day already any familiar acquaintance with hieroglyphical characters must have been lost, as we may take this for the fourth century after Christ, if we consider that well-executed hieroglyphical inscriptions have been preserved from the time of Decius, two hundred and fifty years after Christ. The Egyptian commentator on the Greek writers hardly needed a translator, while hieroglyphics seem to have been first introduced into Greek by Philip.

Our conjecture, according to which the author named after the Egyptian Horus—son of Isis—came from Philæ, the Island of Isis, upon which the heathenish Egyptian worship was very long practiced, and where, also, some knowledge of writing in hieroglyphics existed up to a late period, gives his true relation to the epoch of our selection.

GEORGE EBERS.

October 1st, 1886.

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THE BRIDE OF THE NILE.

CHAPTER I.

MEMPHIS.

THE half of a lustrum had elapsed since Egypt had succumbed to the young power of the Arabs, grown up with unheard-of vigor and rapidity. An easy prey it had fallen into the hands of a well-trained little band of Moslem warriors, and the fair province, which shortly before had been an ornament of the Byzantine Empire and the truest supporter of Christianity, now belonged to the Caliph Omar, and had to submit to seeing the crescent exalted everywhere by the side of the cross.

But seldom had a hotter summer oppressed the unhappy land; and the Nile, whose increase, as always, had been awaited with festal preparations, on the seventeenth of June, that "night of trickling," had hitherto deceived the hope of the Egyptians, and instead of rising dwindled daily.

In this time of anxiety—on July 10th, of the year 643 A. D. —a caravan from the north made its entrance into Memphis.

In that desolate, decaying City of the Pyramids, which, like the leaf of a mighty reed had developed in length only, since limits had been set to its increase in breadth by the Nile and the Lybian mountain chain, even this small caravan attracted the attention of passers-by, while in the Memphis of former years hardly would it have been deemed worth the trouble to lift up one's head, though the main street (more than a mile long) as far as eye could reach had been alive with rows of wagons freighted with merchandise, stately trains of vehicles drawn by oxen, glittering hosts of imperial troops, or endless processions.

The merchant who rode in front of the caravan on a dromedary of choicest breed was a slim Moslem, clad in white silk. An ample turban covered the small head of this man, and threw somewhat into shadow the refined features of his oldish face.

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The Egyptian who as guide kept abreast of the merchant upon a nimble little ass, looked often and admiringly into his face, although it was not handsome, with its sunken cheeks, sparse beard, and large eagle nose, for it was lighted up by two eyes beaming with intelligence and kindly feeling. But this delicate-looking old gentleman, whose benevolent features showed many a furrow drawn by pain and sickness, knew how to command and enforce obedience to his will, as was manifest from the firm set of his thin lips, and the zeal with which his nod was obeyed by the haughty, bearded warriors who followed him, armed to the teeth.

His Egyptian attendant, the chief of interpreters or guide, a surly, brown-skinned Memphite, curved his back whenever he chanced, unawares, to come close up to the wild dromedary riders as though he expected a cut or a thrust, while, to the merchant Haschim, the owner of the caravan, he chatted fearlessly with the garrulity of his class.

"How well acquainted you are here in Memphis," said the Egyptian, after the old gentleman had expressed his astonishment at the melancholy change and decline of the city.

"Thirty years ago," replied the merchant, "my business used to bring me here frequently. How many houses now stand empty and ready to tumble down that one could only get into those days by paying down heavy gold! Everywhere ruins! Who has so miserably defaced that beautiful church? I know from General Amr himself that not a single Christian house of worship was touched by our men."

"It was the principal church of the Melchites, servants of the emperor," cried the guide, as though herein lay sufficient explanation of what had been done. The merchant, however, did not take it so, but asked, "Well, and what is so bad in their doctrine?"

"What?" ejaculated the Egyptian, and his eyes began to sparkle wrathfully. "What? they dismember the divine person of the Saviour, and attribute different natures to it. And besides, all the Greeks in the country here, before your people put an end to the abomination, supported by the imperial power, treated us, the lords of the land, like slaves. They drove us into their churches by force, and all who had Egyptian blood in their veins were dealt with as rebels and lepers. They mocked at and branded us as heretics on account of our faith in the indivisible nature of our divine Saviour."

"And therefore," interposed the merchant, "just as soon had driven away the Greeks you proceeded against them

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and their houses of worship less mildly than we, whom you stigmatize as 'infidels,' had done against you."

"Mildness toward them!" replied the Egyptian, scornfully, casting an evil eye upon the demolished edifice. "They have reaped what they have sown, and—praised be the Saviour!—whoever now in Egypt does not believe in your one only God confesses now the *one* nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. You chased away the Melchite faction, and then it was for us to lay hands upon the houses of their wretched Saviour, whom they, at the Synod of Chalcedon—let them be accursed!—divested of His heavenly dignity."

"Nevertheless, the Melchites are your comrades in the faith—they are Christians," said the merchant.

"Christians!" repeated the guide, contemptuously, shrugging his shoulders. "They may hold themselves to be such! As for me and everybody with me—great and small in all the land—we are of opinion that they are not at all justified in styling themselves Christians and our comrades in the faith. They are all accursed, and must be, with their hundred, no, thousand of devilish heresies, which would make of our God and Redeemer a thing like yon idol on that stone post over there. Above it is a cow, below a man; and what rational man, I ask, can pray to such a mongrel creature? We Jacobites, Monophysites, or whatever else they choose to call us, yield not a tittle of the divine nature of our Lord and Saviour; and if the old faith is to be done away with, then I shall turn Moslem and be a convert to your great, only god; for, before I ever give in to the heresy of the Melchites I'd rather let my wife and child be hacked to pieces! Who knows what may happen! Many an advantage too would come from belonging to your party; for you have the power, and are able to keep it! We are ruled by foreigners anyhow; and who would not rather pay the lesser tax to the wise and sound caliph at Medina than the greater one to that sickly Melchite brood of emperors at Constantinople? The Mukaukas George is certainly no bad man; but judging from the brief resistance he made to you he is of the same opinion. As pious, upright people, our neighbors, and likely of the same stock originally, he prefers you—I know it through my brother—to those Byzantine heretics, flayers of men and blood-hounds; and, at the same time, the Mukaukas is as good a Christian as anybody."

The Arabian, meanwhile, had listened attentively, with an occasional sly smile, to the Memphite, who was forced to break off his discourse by the duties of his calling. Now the Egyptian directed the caravan into an avenue which led to the

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street lying parallel to the stream, where were situated some handsome residences surrounded by gardens.

As soon as man and beast began to step upon the better pavement, said the merchant: "I used to be well acquainted with the father of the man whose name you called just now. He was a wealthy and at the same time well-disposed man, and of his son, too, I heard only what was good. Does he still bear the title of governor—or how did you call it just now? Mukaukas?"

"Certainly, master!" answered the interpreter. "There is no older family than his in Egypt; and if old Menas were rich, Mukaukas George is much more so through inheritance and the dowry of his wife. A more judicious and fair governor we can not wish for. He looks closely to his subordinates too, although, to be sure, his business is no longer discharged with his usual dispatch; for although he is hardly older than I am —and I am nearing sixty—he is hardly ever rid of sickness; and it has been months since he was seen out-of-doors; even when your governor wants to see him, he comes across from over there. It is a pity about that man; and who do you suppose has been the ruin of that fine frame of his? Why, nobody but those Melchite hounds! Just ask up and down the Nile, long as it is, after the author of a misfortune, and you will always get the same answer. Wherever the Melchite or the Greek enters there the grass stops growing!"

"But harm to the Mukaukas, the highest deputy of the emperor!" exclaimed the Arabian. The other, however, interrupted him, asseverating:

"Think you that he was safe from them? They did not, indeed, touch his own person, but it came in a worse way; for in an uprising of the Melchites against our party—it was in Alexandria, and the late Greek patriarch Cyrus took a hand at the game—two sons of his, two strong, handsome fellows, were shot down like mad dogs, and this has broken him down completely."

"Poor man!" sighed the Arab. "And is no other child left to him?"

"Oh, yes, sir, yes! A son and the widow of the oldest one killed. She, indeed, went into a convent after her husband's death, but her child, little Maria, about ten years old, she left with her grandparents."

"That is fine!" cried the merchant; "she must have brought sunshine into the house."

"Of course she did, sir! Any way, there is no lack of joy there just at this time. The only surviving son, Orion by name,

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came home day before yesterday from Constantinople, where he has been for a long while, and this has put life into things. Half the city went crazy over him. Thousands went out to meet him as though he had been the Saviour. Arches of triumph were erected in his honor, and even my folks—there was no talk of holding back—all wanted to see the son and heir of the great Mukaukas; and the women, of course, took the lead!"

"Your tone," said the Arab, "seems to say that the newcomer is not worthy of such honor."

"That is according to how one looks at it. At all events, he is the only son of the first man in the country."

"But does not promise to be like his father?"

"Well, I don't know!" cried the other. "My brother, an ecclesiastic, the superintendent of our high school, was his teacher, and says that he has never met with another head equal to Orion's. Everything came easily to him, and at the same time he was as diligent as any poor child. Marcus thinks that we, his parents, and his native city, Memphis, have a right to expect fame and honor from him; but I—I see the shadows too, and I tell you, women are going to turn his head, and in the end ruin him. Handsome he is, more elegant-looking than the old man, at his age, and he takes advantage of this, and if a pretty girl comes in his way—and there is one forever in his path—"

"Then the young scapegrace catches at the bait," laughed the Moslem. "If there is nothing more than that to make you anxious about him, I am glad for his sake. He is young, and the like is a matter of course."

"No, sir, even my brother—he is in Alexandria now, still blindly devoted and foolishly partial to his former scholar—even he sees threatening danger here. If he does not alter in this respect he will depart further and further from the commandments of the Lord, receive hurt to his soul, and perils beset him on all sides like roaring lions. The noble gift of beauty and a winning manner is luring him on to ruin; and it is contrary to my wish, but it misgives me—"

"You look on the dark side and judge harshly," responded the old man. "Youth—"

"Youth, too," returned the guide, "at least Christian youth, has to gain the mastery over self, and if any one is disposed kindly to that handsome fellow it is I, and I might as well acknowledge it. If he does but give me a nod, I feel as if some good fortune had happened to me, and it is just so with a thousand other men in Memphis, and no more than right

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the women; and yet in spite of all this, very many bitter tears have been shed on his account. But by all the saints, if one speaks of the wolf, directly— Only see, there he is! Halt—halt a bit, men! It will be worth while, sir, to tarry a moment."

"That splendid chariot and four standing there in front of that lofty garden portal is his, is it?"

"Those are Pannonian race-horses, that he has brought with him, swift as lightning and at the same time— But there, look! Ah, now they step back behind the garden hedge; but you—you must still be able to see them from your tall dromedary. That little girl with him is the daughter of the widow Susannah, who is the owner of that garden and the fine palace behind those trees."

"A magnificent property!" exclaimed the Arab.

"I agree with you," responded the Memphite; "the garden reaches to the Nile, and how it is tended!"

"Did not the wheat merchant Philammon live here formerly?" asked the merchant, as though old memories were asserting themselves.

"To be sure he did! He was Susannah's husband, and must have been a man of fifty when he courted her. That little girl is her only daughter, the richest heiress in all the land, but in spite of her sixteen years, not well developed—an old man's child, you know—and yet pretty and merry, a laughing dove in maiden's form, so brisk and so lively! Her own people have christened her the 'Humming-Bird.'"

"Good—good and apt," smilingly approved the merchant. "She is small, a child rather than a grown-up young lady; but I am pleased with the gay, pretty creature. The son of the Mukaukas—what is his name?"

"Orion, sir," answered the other.

"Zounds," laughed the old gentleman, "you did not flatter, man! A young man like this Orion is not to be met with every day! What a figure! How those brown curls set him off! And you are right about another thing too; this sort twists his own mother round his finger, and then other women follow her example. He has, moreover, an open, sensible countenance, showing that there is something in him. Only he should have left that purple robe and golden gewgaws at Constantinople! The like comport no more with this broken-down, dismal city."

During these last words the Memphite set his ass in motion again; meanwhile the Arab held him back, for he was attracted by what was passing behind the garden walls.

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He there saw how the handsome Orion placed on the arm of the little lady a small white Spitz dog of uncommon beauty that apparently belonged to him; saw how she kissed it, and flung a long blade of grass around its neck, as though she would thus take its measure. Then the old man perceived how frolicsomely they both laughed; how they looked into each other's eyes and then parted. In doing so she rose on tiptoe to reach a rare shrub, on the top of which bloomed two dainty purple bell-flowers. She quickly plucked them, handed them to him, blushing as she did so, and giving a playful tap to the hand with which he had seconded her in her effort to reach the flowers, the sunniest smile beamed upon the young man from her innocent countenance, as he kissed the spot with which her finger had come in contact, and touched the flowers, too, with his lips.

The old gentleman surveyed all this as pleasantly and sympathetically as if it had awakened in his mind the sweetest memories, and his kind eyes twinkled when Orion, no less gay and frolicsome than she, whispered a few words in her ear, and taking a long blade of grass from her girdle, and as though he ought to be chastised, drew it quickly across his face, and then she flew toward the palace, bounding like a fawn over grass-plot and flower-beds, without giving any heed to his repeated calls of: "Catharine, sweetest, great grown-up young lady, Catharine!"

This had been a charming little adventure, and old Haschim clung to it in retrospect, chuckling over it with complacency after he and his party had left the scene of it a considerable distance behind. It was Orion, the son of the Mukaukas George, whom he had to thank for this interesting scene, and when he heard the four horses belonging to that young gentleman's chariot approach at a slow trot he turned around and gave it a good look.

But after the four Pannonians, the chariot covered with figures in chased silver, and its charioteer, forming a whole of rare beauty and best taste, had slowly passed him by, in order then to rush forward with the swiftness of the wind and vanish amid thick clouds of dust, the merchant's face had lost its cheerful expression, and there was a touch of deep melancholy in his voice, when he ordered one of the young camel-drivers to pick up and bring to him the flowers that were left behind them in the dust.

He had been a witness to the handsome young man's having flung the friendly token upon the hot sand of the street.

"Your brother is right. Women are the breakers that

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threaten to ingulf this young man, and she has reason to dread him, too, I fear."

"Do you really think so?" asked the guide. "Yes, indeed, there might well come out of it something serious for her! Their dear mothers have the matter already in hand. They both wallow in gold, and 'birds of a feather flock together,' you know. Thank God, the sun still shines above the pyramids! Let your people turn in at that great caravansary over there. Its host is an honest man, and there is plenty of shade on his premises."

"So far as the servants and animals are concerned," replied the merchant, "they can rest here. I, the leader of the caravan, and a few of the men will take a little refreshment, and then you must conduct us to the governor; I have something to say to him. It is no longer early—"

"Never do you mind, sir," answered the Egyptian. "On such glowing days as these, the Mukaukas prefers to receive after sunset. If you have any business to transact with him, in me you came to the right man. Bring out a few gold pieces, and I'll procure you audience this very evening through Sebek, his steward; he is my cousin. While you are taking a little rest here, I'll ride on to the governor's mansion, and then come and report to you what I learn."

CHAPTER II.

THE caravansary, to which the merchant Haschim repaired with his train, environed by palm-trees, stood upon an eminence near the road. Before the destruction of the heathen antiquities in the valley of the Nile it had been a temple of Imhotep, the Egyptian Æsculapius, the friendly god of the healing art, who had a shrine even in the city of the dead. This had been half destroyed, half buried by sand from the desert, while an enterprising inn-keeper had bought very cheap the pretty temple of Imhotep, together with the sacred grove appertaining to it. Since then it had passed from one hand to another, a great wooden structure for the accommodation of travelers having been annexed to the massively built temple, and in the palm grove, which reached to the ill-kept quay, stables had been erected, besides fenced-in inclosures for the safe-keeping of droves. Thus the whole resembled a cattle-market, and indeed butchers and jockeys were glad to resort hither in the interests of their callings. On the other hand the grove of palm-trees—one of the few left standing in the neighborhood of the city—attracted the citizens of Memphis

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for "a bit of an airing" and to regale themselves in its shade. Hard by the stream, "mine host" had arranged tables and benches, and boats were for hire in the little harbor upon his estate. Pleasure parties from the city, too, making excursions by water, were fond of landing here and taking refreshments under the palm-trees of Nesptah.

The two rows of houses, which had formerly separated this assembly-place for man and beast from the street, extending to the Nile alongside of it, had long since become ruins, and been leveled to the ground by the owners of the property. Now, under the supervision of Arabian task-masters, some hundreds of workmen might be seen busied in demolishing a huge ruin dating back to the Ptolemaic kings, which was hardly two hundred paces distant from the palm-tree grove. In spite of the burning heat of the afternoon, they continued to load ox-carts with the immense blocks of lime-stone and marble, as also numerous tall columns, on which had rested the roof of Jupiter's temple at Memphis, in order to carry them to the quay, whence they would be conveyed on flat-boats to the eastern bank of the Nile.

There was being erected the new residence of Amr, the general and vicegerent of the caliph. The temples of the old gods were used in its behalf as a quarry, and furnished not only carefully hewn working materials of strongest stone, but also columns of every order of Greek architecture in quantities that needed only to be set up again on the other side of the stream; for the Arabians scorned no material, but in the erection of their own houses of worship used indifferently blocks of stone and pillars, whether they came from heathen temples or Christian churches.

In the caravansary temple of Imhotep, walls and roofs had been originally covered over and over with representations of the gods and hieroglyphical inscriptions; but smoke from the fire on the hearth had long since blackened them, hands zealous for the faith had been unwearied in destroying their record, drawing the whitewash brush over many a one, and supplying their places by Christian symbols or very worldly scribblings in Greek characters, or those used by the common people of Egypt.

In what had formerly been the grand hall of the temple the Arab supped with his followers, and all of them abstained from wine save the conductor of the caravan, who was no Moslem, but belonged to the Persian sect of the Masdakites.

After the old gentleman had satisfied himself at a little table apart he called the same to him and directed him to put the

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bale with the carpet upon the sedan, between the two great sumpter camels, in such a manner as to be secure, but at the same time easily removed.

"It has already been done," answered the Persian, a splendid-looking man, tall and tough as an oak, with a head encircled by flowing locks, yellow as a lion's mane, while he stroked his great beard.

"So much the better," responded Haschim. "Come with me into the open air."

So saying, he preceded the Masdakite into the palm grove.

The star of day had gone to rest behind the pyramids, the city of the dead, and the Libyan mountain chain and its reflection now painted the eastern sky and the bare chalk cliffs of Babylon, on the other side of the stream, with changeful hues of indescribable beauty. It was as though the colors of every manner of rose reared by the most skilled florist of Arsinoë or Naucratis, from golden-yellow to purple, and most delicate violet to richest crimson, had been brought hither in order to flood plains, peaks and mountain ravines with enchanting tints.

The old man's chest heaved at this spectacle, and while he drew a deep breath he laid his hand gently on the gigantic arm of the Persian and said: "Your master, Masdak, teaches it to be God's will that a man call one thing his own neither more nor less than the other, and that there is neither rich nor poor upon earth, since each possession belongs to all in common. Now, only behold with me here! Who has not seen this has seen nothing; there is nothing fairer here below, and to whom does it belong? To your poor, simple Salech there, whom we suffer to trot half naked after the camels, it is just as free as to you, me and the caliph. With regard to His great works, God has arranged it all just as your master desires. How much beauty is the common possession of our race! Let us be thankful for it, Hassan; for verily it is no small thing. Property now, such as a man gains or loses, that indeed is quite a different matter. Could we all stand upon a level race-course, have what we want for the asking, affix lead to the feet of the swift, so that no one should outstrip the other that would—But now, let us rather feast our eyes upon that wondrous beauty over yonder! Just look! what awhile ago rivaled this bell-flower in hue, has deepened to ruby, what was bright violet to rich amethyst. That golden edge to those clouds is as it were a setting for the jewels, and all this is mine, is yours, is ours, so long as eye and heart delight and exult in it."

Hereupon the Masdakite broke into a joyous, sonorous laugh,

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and cried: "Yes, master, if anybody had your eyes! The sky and the mountains over there do look mottled enough, and it is not often that we see such bright red colors at home; but what good do we get from that enchantment? You see rubies and amethysts up yonder, but I— Those jewels in your carpet signify something different from that airy splendor! No harm meant, in the world, master, but I would not give those bales there for all the sunsets on top of the ground, and it would not cost me a sigh of regret either." Hereupon he laughed merrily again and continued: "But you, good master, you would beware of closing the bargain! As for us Masdakites, the time has not come for us yet!"

"But if it were, and you got the carpet?"

"Then I would sell it, and add the proceeds to my savings, and go home, buy a farm, and take to myself a pretty wife and breed camels and horses."

"But day after to-morrow would come the poor, who had laid up nothing and made no good bargain with the evening sky, and every one of them would want a bit of your land, a camel and a foal. You would never get to see a glorious sunset, and your pretty wife would have to go out into the world with you in order to help you to share with others. Better let things go on in the old way, my Hassan, and may the Most High preserve to you your honest heart, you silly old fellow you!"

Then the giant bent low, and as he was gratefully kissing his master's hand, the guide came back, with a long face, for he had promised too much. Just as he had been about to petition an audience for the Arab, the Mukaukas George—an unheard of thing—had been borne off to a gondola, in order to take a sail with his son and the ladies of his household. The steward had reported the return of Orion to have quite rejuvenated the old gentleman. Haschim must now wait until morning, and he, the guide, would advise him to pass the night in the hostelry of Sostratus, where was to be found everything needful for comfort.

But the merchant preferred to stay where he was. The postponement disturbed him little, especially as he wished to consult an Egyptian physician about an ailment of long standing, and the interpreter assured him that a more skilled and accomplished one than the far-famed Philippus was not to be found in the whole country. It was lovely out here, and from the benches on the river bank the comet could be observed, which had been visible for some nights past, and certainly portended bad times. The whole city was paralyzed, as it

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were, by anxiety; this was clearly manifest in the inn of Nesptah; for, commonly, when the cool breezes of evening began to blow, the tables and benches under the palm-trees would be full of excursionists, coming both by water and land; but now, who could trust himself to think of pleasure at such a time of apprehension?

Therewith he again mounted his ass, in order to summon the doctor, but old Haschim, leaning on the Masdakite's arm, repaired to the benches beneath the palm-trees, and thence gazed thoughtfully out upon the starry heavens, while his young companion dreamed of home, fancying himself there, having, without the costly carpet, but with his own savings only, become the purchaser of meadow-land, upon which he had built a house, presided over by a pretty little wife. Would she turn out to be of a fair or dark complexion? He would rather have her fair.

But here his air-castle suddenly toppled over; for something was approaching upon the Nile that attracted his attention, and which he was impelled to show to his master as well.

Before them lay the river like a broad black ribbon brocaded with silver. The crescent moon was mirrored in its almost motionless surface, and where its water was ruffled, edged the low laps of the waves with flashing brightness. Bats from the city of the dead came flying to the Nile, flapping their wings and rocking to and fro over it like light shadows agitated by the wind. Only a few tri-cornered sails skimmed over the water like huge white birds, but from the north, the direction of the town, approached the palms by way of the river a large body illumined by two glittering far-shining eyes.

"A stately vessel assuredly, that of the Mukaukas George!" said the merchant, and slowly it steered its way straight to the grove from the middle of the river. Meanwhile upon the country-road, behind the inn, the tramping of horses' feet became audible. Haschim looked around and beheld torch-bearers, running before a carriage.

"So far," said the old man, "will the invalid sail, and then, in order to avoid the night air upon the water, he will go home in a carriage. Strange that for the second time to-day I meet his much-talked-of son."

Soon the governor's gondola drew nearer to the palm-trees. It was a large, beautiful bark of cedar-wood, with richly gilt ornamentation, and the image of John, the tutelary saint of the family, at its back. The radiant crown, which encircled the head of this figure, was set with lamps, and great lanterns hung beside it and in the rear of the boat. There beneath

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the canopy reposed the Mukaukas George, and at his side sat his wife, Nephoris. Opposite them sat their son and a young lady of lofty stature, at whose feet nestled fondly a little girl about ten years of age. An older woman, a Greek, the child's governess, sat by a very large man, viz., Philippus the doctor, upon a sofa, outside the shelter of the balcony. The cheerful sound of the lute accompanied the boat, and he who touched its strings so artistically proved to be none other than the recently returned Orion.

All this presented a truly refreshing spectacle: the fairest representation of a noble family united in love. But who was the young lady beside Orion? This time he was devoting his whole attention to her, and if he touched the strings with peculiarly deep emotion he sought her eyes, and then it had very much the appearance as if he were playing for her alone, and such a distinction seemed verily to belong to her; for, when the vessel anchored in the little harbor, and Haschim could distinguish her features, he was surprised by the nobility of her beauty, which was of a genuinely Greek type.

Now a few richly dressed slaves, who must have come by land with the carriage, boarded the vessel, in order to bear the sick gentleman thence to his carriage, and it now appeared that the chair upon which the sufferer sat was provided with poles, that allowed him to be lifted up and moved from place to place. A stout blackamoor seized hold of these behind, and as another one presented himself to grasp them in front, Orion waved him back, took his place, picked up the chair with his father in it and bore him across the gangway connecting the boat with the land, past Haschim, to the carriage. Cheerfully and without effort the young man performed the task of bearer, casting loving glances, too, around at his father, as he called out to the other ladies—only his mother, who had solicitously enveloped the invalid in wraps, and the physician had followed the patient—in lively tones, to disembark and wait for him here, and then he moved forward, as seen in the light of the torches that were carried before him.

"Poor man!" thought the merchant, as he followed the sick Mukaukas with his eyes. But the saddest and hardest fate becomes easy, if one has a son to lift one about so affectionately.

He thought that he could now find the explanation of Orion's having thrown away those flowers; yes, as the young lady landed to whose arm the child clung so fondly, he said to himself that the little daughter of the rich widow Susannah would most assuredly find it difficult to keep the field against this regal looking rival. What a figure, what a majestic gait had

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this maiden, and how sweet and musical were the tones of her voice as she told the child the names of several constellations, and pointed out to her the comet that had just risen!

Haschim sat in darkness and, unobserved, could watch what was going on at the bench on the shore, which had been lighted up by one of the ship's lanterns, and he was delighted at the unexpected diversion; for, whatever concerned the son of the Mukaukas, awakened his sympathy and curiosity. He was lured into forming an opinion of his own as to the merits of this uncommon young man, and the sight of the lovely girl there upon the bench warmed up his old heart. That child must be Maria, the governor's granddaughter. Now the carriage set off, rolling rapidly away, and after some little while Orion rejoined the ladies.

Poor little daughter of the rich widow Susannah! How very different his manners with you, young lady, from what they had been with that little thing! His eye hung enraptured upon her features, and in the midst of the conversation that he addressed to her he would sometimes pause, and what he said must be now earnest and captivating, and again witty; for not only she, but the little girl's governess as well, listened to him with absorbed attention, and when the young girl laughed there was something especially pure and melodious in the sound. Her nature seemed to be so exalted that such an expression of unrestrained joyousness surprised in her, and made such an impression as the perfume of a gorgeous flower would do, of which one had believed up to that time that it was made only to please the eye, and none other of the senses. And the one to whom everything that Orion said was addressed, listened to him not only attentively, but in a manner which made it plain to the merchant that the narrator himself was yet more pleasing to her than what he knew how to communicate, in so animated a way. If this maiden were to mate with the governor's son, what a pair they would make!

Now came the hostess, Dame Taus, a notable, buxom Egyptian woman in middle life, offering milk, grapes, fruit and some of her famous fritters, prepared by her own hands, and as she did so her eyes glittered from joy and gratified ambition; for the son of the great Mukaukas, the pride of the city, who formerly used to frequent her house, not entirely on account of her cakes, often coming by water with parties of jolly comrades, mostly Greek officers, all of whom had now fallen or been banished from the country, was he not now doing her the honor to seek her out, so soon after his return? Her nimble tongue stood not still as she told him how her hus-

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band and herself had gone to meet him, as far as the arch of triumph, at the gate of Menes, and with them Emmy and her baby boy. She would have him to know that her daughter was married now, and this first little one she had had christened "Orion."

And when the young man proceeded to inquire whether Emmy was as charming a creature as ever, and as much like her mother, Dame Taus shook her finger at him, and asked, as she indicated the young lady, if the gay bird, after which so many sighed when it left these parts, was finally caged, and whether, may be, that beautiful lady there—

Orion, however, cut short her speech, saying that he was still his own master, but already felt the noose around his neck. Hereupon the lovely girl blushed more deeply than at the hostess's first question; he, however, quickly recovered from his embarrassment, and assured her in a lively manner that honest Taus's little daughter used to be one of the prettiest children in Memphis, and had been no less popular than the fritters of her excellent mother. Dame Taus must give his compliments to the young matron.

Thereupon the hostess went off highly gratified, but he again took up his lute, and while the others were taking refreshments at the request of the young lady, he sung the song of Alkaios in a melodious but subdued voice, to the accompaniment of his lute, which he played in a masterly manner. The eyes of the maiden were riveted upon his lips, and again she seemed to be the sole inspiration of his music. When the time for departure came, and the ladies re-embarked, he went into the hostelry to pay the reckoning. Soon he came back alone, and the merchant saw him pick up a handkerchief that the young lady had left lying upon the table and press it to his lips, while he pursued his way to the boat.

It had fared less happily with those gorgeous flowers in the morning! To that maiden there on the water belonged the heart of the young man. It could not be his sister; but how was she connected with him?

The merchant was soon to be informed, for the guide returned and gave him the intelligence desired. It was Paula, the daughter of Thomas, the far-famed Greek general, who had so persistently and valiantly defended Damascus against the warlike power of Islam. She was the niece of the Mukaukas George.

But the beautiful, dignified girl was only moderately wealthy, a relation of the family, whom they had received into the governor's mansion through compassion, after the disappear-

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ance of her father—for not even his corpse had been found: she was a Melchite! The interpreter thought little of her on that account, and although he had nothing to say against her beauty, he averred that he knew her to be proud and haughty, without the least art in winning the love of anybody, save that child, little Maria, who did seem to be devoted to her. It was an open secret, that even the wife of her uncle, good Nephoris, could not bear her proud niece, and only endured her to please the sick man. What business either had a Melchite in a good Jacobite house? Every word of the guide breathed the aversion which men of low, mean minds so easily conceive against those who are participants in the bounty of their own benefactors.

But the lovely, high-minded daughter of a great man had won the old merchant's heart, and his judgment remained utterly unbiased by that of the Memphite. It was, moreover, speedily to find confirmation, for Dr. Philippus, whom the guide had summoned, was a daily visitor at the governor's mansion, and whose sincere nature had inspired the Arab with the greatest confidence, pronounced Paula so glorious a creature as is rarely seen in this nether world of ours. And yet Providence seemed to have overlooked its own masterpiece, for her life had been darkly overshadowed for some years past. The physician was enabled to promise some alleviation of his sufferings to the old gentleman; in general the two pleased each other so well that they did not part until a late hour of the night, and then as good friends.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HAPPINESS CAN COME AND GO.

MEANWHILE the boat of the Mukaukas, impelled by powerful strokes of the oar, glided smoothly down the stream. On board there was sometimes whispering and then again singing. Little Maria had fallen asleep on Paula's breast; the Greek governess looked first at the comet, which excited apprehensions in her mind, then at Orion, whose beauty thrilled a heart no longer youthful, and lastly at the young lady, whom she could not bear to see thus preferred by this favorite of the gods. It was warm and still, a charming night, and the moonlight that impels the sea to flow in at high tide, also causes the emotions flooding the human breast to rise and swell.

Orion sang whatever Paula asked for, as though nothing was unfamiliar to him that on the lyre of a Greek poet had ever

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entranced the now degenerate world; and the longer lasted the sail the clearer and sweeter sounded his voice, the more melting and captivating became its expression, the more eloquently did it appeal to the maiden's heart; and so Paula yielded to the sweet enchantment, and when he lay down his lute and softly asked if his native land were not beautiful on such a night; what song she loved best, or, if she had any idea what it signified to him to have found her in the house of his parents, she, too, forgot herself so far as to answer him in whispered tones.

Beneath the sheltering trees of the slumbering garden he pressed her hand to his lips, and she tremblingly consented. Dark, dark years lay behind her. The physician's report had been only too true. A series of painful humiliations had attended strokes of fate that were hard upon her, the proud daughter of a distinguished father. Received into a wealthy family, through kindness of heart, the life of a kinswoman, not poor but desolate, had long since proved for her a very thorny path, but day before yesterday all this had altered. Orion was there! At home and abroad his return had been celebrated as a most auspicious event, and a rich share of this benediction had fallen to her portion. He had greeted her not as the dependent cousin, but as the fine, noble woman that she was. Sunshine radiated from his presence, penetrated to her very heart, and left her head once more erect, like a flower finding itself again under the free canopy of heaven, after having been long excluded from light and air. His buoyant spirits and cheerful energy refreshed her heart and mind, the respect that he paid her revived her weakened self-confidence, and filled her soul with warm gratitude. Ah! and how delicious it seemed to her to indulge this sweet sense of gratitude! And then—then had come this evening, the brightest, most glorious that she had enjoyed for years. He had taught her again what she had almost forgotten, viz., that she was still young, with life before her, that she had the right to be happy, to feel rapture, and awaken it in others, perhaps even to love and be loved.

His kiss burned still upon her right hand as she entered the cool chamber where Nephoris sat at her spinning near the couch of her sick husband, who never retired to rest until a late hour. She was awaiting the return of the young people With overflowing heart Paula pressed her lips upon the hand of her uncle, Orion's father—dared she say "her" Orion. Then—a thing that had not happened for a long while before —she kissed her aunt, *his* mother, while she bade good-night

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to her and little Maria; but Nephoris took her salutation coolly, and with an air of surprise, only casting a searching glance upon her and her son. As she did so, assuredly many a thought passed through her brain, pressing for utterance, and yet she restrained herself. As though nothing particular had happened, she allowed the young girl to withdraw, superintended the men who bore her husband to his sleeping-room, gave him a little white pellet, which was required to induce sleep, and, with unwearied solicitude, altered the position of his pillows, until his couch was arranged to his mind. Not until then, and after she had convinced herself that a servant was watching in the adjoining chamber, did she leave him and —there was danger in delay—go in quest of her son.

This tall, vigorous, somewhat corpulent woman, in her youth had been a slender, striking-looking girl of imposing mien; her somewhat ordinary and inexpressive countenance, on the other hand, had never been extraordinarily beautiful. But the years had made little change in it, and it had now become the fat, full face of a composed matron, which had lost all its color by long years of self-sacrificing attendance upon the sick. Her birth and station had lent her a somewhat easy and self-conscious manner, although there was nothing winning or attractive in her address. The joy and woe of another were naught to her, and yet she was capable of long continued acts of self-abnegation in behalf of others, and her heart was susceptible of passionate attachments. These others, to be sure, must be her next of kin, and none besides. Thus it would have been hard to find a truer, more attentive wife, and more affectionate mother, and yet one felt disposed to compare what there was in her of love to a star, whose feeble rays did not reach beyond her nearest blood relations, and somehow even these felt it to be a wondrously strange thing to be admitted within the narrow circle to which were confined the affections of this illiberal soul.

Now she knocked at the door of Orion's sitting-room, and he hailed the late visitor with surprise and joy. She came to converse with him upon an important subject, and did it at this time because the demeanor of both Paula and her son awhile ago compelled her to use haste. Something had passed between those two, and her husband's niece was far beyond the limits of her love's narrow bounds.

She introduced her discourse by saying that she could not sleep. She had a wish at heart in which his father shared. Orion knew very well what she meant, for she had referred to the subject already when talking with him yesterday. His fa-

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ther had treated him with the greatest indulgence, cheerfully paying his debts, without uttering a word of censure, and now it was for him to give up his free bachelor ways and set up an establishment of his own. They had found a match for him, he knew. Neighbor Susannah had just been paying them a call, she said, "And she admits, you rogue, you, that this morning you completely turned her Catharine's little head!"

"I am sorry to hear it," interposed he, with chagrin. "This flirting with the girls has become second nature with me, but I'll put a stop to it right away. It is no longer worthy of me, and now, dear mother, now I feel—"

"That life is beginning in sober earnest," chimed in Nephoris. "The wish that brings me to you leads precisely in that direction. You know it, and can have no objection to make to it that I can see. In short, let me broach the matter to-morrow morning to the widow Susannah. You may safely calculate upon her daughter's liking you; she is the richest heiress in the land, well brought up, and, I repeat it, she has given her little heart to you."

"She had better keep it!" laughed Orion.

Hereupon his mother exclaimed heatedly: "Save your merriment, if you please, for a more fitting season, and for jesting matters. I mean it in all seriousness when I say the girl is sweet and amiable and, God willing, will make you a faithful, devoted wife. Or can it be that you have left your heart in Constantinople? Have you been making love to Senator Justinus's fair cousin? But pshaw! you could hardly suppose that we would receive that flattering Greek."

Then Orion embraced her, exclaiming tenderly: "No, dear mother, no! Constantinople lies far, far behind me, beyond the *Ultima Thule;* but here, here, quite near, in my father's house, have I found something much fairer and more perfect than has ever been beheld by the dwellers on the Bosphorus. That little thing does not suit for a son of our great, broad-shouldered stock. Our descendants, too, are to tower proudly above the ordinary run of people in every particular, and I want no plaything for a wife, but a woman, such as you must have been in your youth yourself, tall, elegant, grand looking. My heart is drawn to no little scrap of a thing, but to a right royal maiden. What need is there of more words? Paula, the glorious daughter of noble Thomas, she is my choice. It has come to me recently like a revelation; I implore your blessing upon my union with her!"

So far Nephoris had suffered her son to proceed. He had, indeed, expressed freely and boldly what she had dreaded hav

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ing to listen to. And how long she had maintained her own self-control! But now an end was put to this restraint. Trembling from excitement she abruptly cut short his speech and exclaimed with highly flushed cheeks: "No more of that, not a word more! Heaven forbid that what I have just had to listen to should prove to be anything else than a foolish, fleeting fancy! Have you, then, wholly forgotten, who and what we are? Do you no longer bear in mind that these people were Melchites, who slew your two dear brothers, our blooming sons? What are we among the Greeks, the orthodox so called? But among the Egyptians, among all who adhere to the saving doctrines of Eutyches, among the Monophysites we stand first, and are so to remain, closing our ears and hearts to heretics and their false faith! A grandson of Menas, a brother of two martyrs for our sublime confession married to a Melchite! Sacrilegious, blasphemous is this thought; I can find no milder term for it! Before I, or your father, submit to it, we shall end our days childless! And for the sake of this adventuress, who owns nothing but her beggarly pride and the scraped-up remnants of a property that, in its best days, never compared with ours, for this ingrate, who with difficulty bestows upon her benefactress, *your* mother, the morning greeting that I am always ready to give kindly to the humblest slave, for her sake, am I, are both your parents to lose their son, the only one left to comfort us by a merciful Heaven! No, no, no! May that never come to pass! And you, Orion, my best beloved, you have been all your life long a rash fellow, but you can not be crazy enough to love that cold beauty—in two days you have seen her for a few hours—to grieve to death your old mother, who for four-and-twenty years has been heaping affection upon you, and to poison the brief span of life left to a father whose days are numbered. You are not going to find the courage for it, my precious child; no, you never could. But if, in some accursed hour, you ever should find it, then—I have always been a devoted mother to you—then—so truly as I hope that God will stand by me and your father in our last hour, then I shall pluck love for you out of my soul like a poisonous weed—that would I, although in so doing, my heart should break—"

Again Orion drew the deeply excited woman close to his heart, for she had long since passionately freed herself from his embrace; gently laying his hand on her mouth, he kissed both eyes, and whispered in her ear:

"He has not the courage, and will hardly be able to summon it up while he lives." Then he seized both her hands, looked her full in the face, and exclaimed: "Never did your

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scapegrace boy know such anguish as while you were making those threats. Oh! what dreadful words those were, and worse ones yet were upon the tip of your tongue. Mother! Mother Nephoris! Your name signifies goodness, but how angry, how very angry you can get!"

So saying, he drew the beloved woman closer, kissed her hair, temples, and cheeks one after the other with a fervor of affection intensified as it were by the shock which he had sustained, and ere she left him he had agreed that she might ask for the hand of little Catharine in his behalf, and in return for this concession obtained her promise that this should not be done on the morrow, but at the earliest day after to-morrow. Already this respite appeared to him like a great boon; and when he was alone and had opportunity to reflect upon what he had done and conceded to his mother, it is true that his heart bled from wounds the depth of which he could not measure himself as yet; nevertheless he rejoiced that the tie binding him to Paula was no closer. His eyes had many a time told her the state of his heart; but the word "love" had not yet crossed his lips, although it amounted to as much. To kiss the hand of a pretty cousin was assuredly allowable. Loveable! Oh! how loveable she was and must be; and yet, for the sake of a maiden, though it had been Aphrodite herself or one of the muses or graces, that were a thing not to be thought of! He might find thousands of beautiful women, but only one mother; and how often had he fancied himself in love with one girl and all thought of her been banished by sight of a prettier one, who, in her turn, he quickly tired of.

This time, indeed, he seemed much more deeply smitten than upon any previous occasion, for he was sure that no such impression had been made upon him even by the fair Persian for whose sake he had committed great follies while still a school-boy, nor the fascinating Heliodora of Constantinople, whom he had not quite forgotten. To give up this Paula was hard, but there was no help for it. To-morrow he must do his best to establish an understanding with her upon a friendly, cousinly basis; for he durst not hope that she would be content with his mere love, like the gentle Heliodora, who, however, was her equal in rank. Charming, incomparably charming it would have been to pass through life at the side of this glorious being! Should he drive through the capital with her he was sure that everybody must pause and turn around to gaze after them. And if she loved him and should open her arms to him tenderly— Oh! oh! why had malicious destiny made her a Melchite? And then, alas! alas! her soul could

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not have been created so particularly well, else in two years she could not have failed to win the love instead of the aversion of his excellent, affectionate mother! Yes, on the whole, it was just as well that it should turn out so; but Paula's image did not leave him, nevertheless, and spoiled his sleep, and his longing to call her his own would not be stilled.

Meanwhile Nephoris did not repair immediately to her husband, but to Paula. A thorough end must be put to this affair before she could lie down to rest. Had her victory promised unmingled satisfaction for the invalid she would have hurried to him with the joyful tidings, for she knew no higher happiness than to prepare for him a pleasant moment; but the Mukaukas had only reluctantly coincided in her choice; for, in his eyes, too, Catharine looked too small and childish for his great tall son, whose intellectual maturity too had been made clearly manifest in many a long conversation held with him since his return, to the delight of his father's heart.

With the best wishes entertained for a pretty little neighbor he could not be satisfied with her as a match for Orion. To him, the father, Paula would have been a dear daughter-in-law; and it had often pleased his fancy to think of her at Orion's side. But she was a Melchite; and he knew, alas! what a dislike his wife had to her, and so he locked up this wish in his own bosom to keep from vexing that faithful nurse, who only lived, felt, and thought for him: and Nephoris knew or suspected all this, and said to herself that it might cost him his night's rest if he should learn what Orion had promised her before he retired.

With Paula it was different. The sooner she learned that nothing was to be expected from her son, so much the better for her.

This last morning she and Orion had greeted each other like a pair of lovers, and just now they had parted like a betrothed couple. She would not again be witness to such a vexatious spectacle, and so she promised herself the pleasure—to be sure she must keep her counsel until the day after to-morrow—of going to the house of the Damascene widow and exchanging blissful congratulations.

The moment she entered, from her beaming countenance Paula had drawn the conclusion that she brought bad news for her, and so maintained a fitting composure. With the mask of cool indifference drawn down she suffered the outpourings of a mother's exhilarated heart to flow over her, and wished the young couple joy; but she did so with a smile that infuriated Nephoris. She was not ill-disposed as a general thing, but

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where this girl was concerned her whole nature seemed altered, and she had no objection whatever to showing her once more that modesty became one in her position. All this she said to herself after she turned her back upon Paula's chamber; but perhaps this woman, who had a great deal of good in her, might have been moved to repentance if it had been allowed her, during the following hours, to look into the heart of the orphan intrusted to her charge.

Only once Paula sobbed violently; then she indignantly dried her tears, gazed long and gloomily upon the floor, at the same time often shaking her beautiful head as though there had befallen her something unheard-of, incomprehensible.

With a bitter moan she finally composed herself for rest; and while she sought in vain for sleep and the power to pray and silently submit, time stretched before her like an endless plain, destiny looked like a cruel hunter, and the game that he pursued was herself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE.

On the following evening rode into the governor's domains the merchant Haschim, with a small portion of his caravan. Strangers would have taken it as the abode of a rich country gentleman rather than the residence of a government officer of high rank; for in the large yards at the rear, which were surrounded on three sides by farm buildings, now after sundown they were driving up great herds of sheep and kine; half a hundred horses of noble breed came in couples from the watering-pool, while brown and black slaves led a great drove of camels into a sandy inclosure to be fed.

The residence of the proprietor, in its uncommonly palatial size and old-time grandeur, was right well fitted to accommodate a vicegerent of the emperor; and, indeed, the Mukaukas George, to whom all this appertained, had long been invested with the aforesaid office. After the conquest of the land it had been also left to him by the Arabs, and at present he guided the affairs of his Egyptian fellow-citizens no more in the name of the emperor at Constantinople, but as commissioned by the caliph at Medina, and his general, Amr. The Moslem conquerors had found in him a kindly disposed and wise mediator, while those of the same race and creed yielded him obedience as to the noblest and richest man of their nation, as well as to the representative of a family whose ancestors were in high esteem even under the Pharaohs.

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The residence of the Mukaukas was only Greek, or better, Alexandrine; the courts and inferior buildings attached to it, on the contrary, had quite the appearance of belonging to some mighty potentate of a great Oriental race, a pacha or satrap, as the progenitors of the Mukaukas had been called in heathen times, and as such been honored at court and among the people.

The guide had not exaggerated in his report to the merchant of this man's property. His great landed estates were situated both in Upper and Lower Egypt, and were cultivated by some thousands of slaves and many overseers. Here in Memphis was the central point for the administration of his private property, and adjoining the offices needed by him as a government official was one destined for the transaction of his own business.

Well-kept dykes, and the broad street skirting the landing on the Nile separated his extensive Memphite possessions from the river, and a street followed the wall which marked its limits on the north. Upon this fronted the large gate—always open by day—that granted access to those who wished to see the Mukaukas as servants or on business; the grand portal on the Nile street, adorned with Corinthian pillars and always locked, through which the boating party had yesterday been admitted, was only opened to the family and visitors of the governor who were of high rank. By the people's gate rose a guard-house which sheltered a small squad of Egyptian soldiery, to whom was intrusted the personal safety of the Mukaukas.

Just as soon after the heat of the past day, as a refreshing breeze began to blow from the river, all was life in the court-yard behind the side-gate. From the doors of all the dwelling-houses emerged men, women, and girls, to inhale the fresh night air. A few servant-girls and slaves drew water from huge jars, and bore it thence in prettily shaped pitchers, while the freedmen of the establishment, sitting about in groups, refreshed themselves after the toils of the day by playing and singing. From the slave-quarters, which encircled a second court-yard, there mingled oddly the singing of sacred songs, the shrill and hollow sound of pipe and timbrel inviting to the dance, quarreling and laughter, the screeching of a girl dragged into the dance, and the outcry of a slave smarting under the bailiff's rod.

The door for general admission, that in honor of the recently returned Orion was still decorated with rich wreaths of flowers and foliage, now stood wide open to furnish egress to

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the accountants and clerks, or to afford access to the citizens, who were fond of visiting their acquaintances in the governor's employ of an evening; for there was constantly to be found some of the Mukaukas's higher employés who knew more than anybody else about the newest affairs in Church and State.

Under the wooden porch of the chief inspector's house soon there sat also grouped together a great number of men who gave themselves up with all diligence to conversation that would have been rich in enjoyment to them, even without the beer which was handed to them by their host, that they might drink to the health of their master's son so recently returned home; for what was more delightful to an Egyptian than to keep the ball of discussion flying, and in so doing depreciate by jest and jeer superiors, otherwise unapproachable, those who differed from them in religion, or the enemies of their country.

This evening especially many a trenchant word, many a happy hit must have been heard, for there was no end to the peals of laughter and loud shouts of applause in front of the chief inspector's house; and the commander of the guard at the people's gate cast envious and impatient glances at the merry company, of which he would gladly have made one, but he durst not yet forsake his post, because there stood ready the saddled horses of the messengers waiting to be dispatched; there were suppliants and tradesmen to be admitted or dismissed, and in the spacious antechambers of the governor's palace were still assembled many who desired to speak with the Mukaukas; for it was known to all Memphis that the sick governor only gave audience of an evening during the hottest months.

The Egyptians still lacked confidence in the Arab authorities; and everybody sought to avoid being referred to the deputy of the Mukaukas, because not one of his subordinates was as wise and just as he. How such a sufferer found time and strength for keeping so strict an eye upon these deputies it was hard to explain, and yet certain it was that every judgment was put to the proof by himself.

The audience hour was past, and the anxiety excited by the postponement of the inundation and the appearance of the comet had filled the ante-rooms this evening with more petitioners than usual. Deputations from cities and village magistrates were received in companies, suitors in private affairs singly, and most of them had withdrawn satisfied, or with good advice. A solitary countryman, whose just cause had been long awaiting adjustment, had stayed behind, and after he had

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sacrificed to the functionary in charge a few drachmas out of his poverty, he hoped even yet to reap the fruit of his patient tarrying, when the master of ceremonies ordered him to come again the next day, and, thanks to the gold piece that he had yesterday received from his cousin, the guide, he opened obsequiously to the merchant Haschim the lofty doors leading to the apartments of the Mukaukas; but the Arab had observed the countryman, and insisted upon allowing him the precedence. His intercession availed, and after a few minutes the peasant came back content, and gratefully kissed Haschim's hand. Thereupon the chamberlain introduced the old gentleman with his followers (who carried after him a heavy bale) into a magnificent ante-chamber, and his patience was sorely put to the proof before the summons came to him to show the governor his wares.

His time for recreation having arrived, after the Mukaukas had consented, by a silent nod, to receive the well recommended merchant later, he continued his game of draughts, unconcerned about those whom he kept waiting. He lay upon a divan covered with the sleek hide of a lioness, while his youthful partner sat opposite him, on a low seat. The doors of the room facing the Nile, where he also held audiences in a recumbent posture, were now half opened, in order to admit the cooler, but still mild evening breeze. The green *belarium*,* which by day had hindered the passage of the sun's rays through the opening in the middle of the roof, was drawn back, and moon and stars looked into the apartment, that very well fulfilled its destiny, by offering an endurable place of refuge from the burning heat of summer days, for its walls were lined with cool tiles glazed and variegated, its pavement was formed of rich mosaics of intricate pattern and many colors, and in the center of this artistic flooring, arose the real dispenser of coolness, viz., a broad basin, twelve feet in diameter, of brown porphyry, flecked with white, whence a fountain sprung aloft, the waters of a *jet d'eau* sprinkling the whole environs with its delicious spray. A few cushions, chairs, and little tables of cool metal constituted the whole remaining furniture of this lofty apartment, lighted brightly by numerous lamps. A gentle breeze came through the uncovered roof and open doors, slightly agitating the flames of the lamps, and sporting with the brown locks of Paula, who was apparently absorbed in her game of draughts.

Orion, who stood behind her, had already made several vain

* The awning drawn over the open roof.

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attempts to attract her attention to himself; now he officiously volunteered to bring her a scarf that she might not take cold; but she declined curtly and decidedly, although the air blowing in from the river was damp, and she had several times drawn her mantle more closely about her.

The young man bit his lips at this new repulse. He did not know that his mother had communicated to her the result of their last night's interview, and found no explanation for Paula's altered demeanor. From morning until now she had treated him with icy coldness, had barely deigned a forced "yes" or "no" to his questions, and to him, the spoiled pet of the ladies, this demeanor became more and more unbearable. His mother had judged her correctly. She allowed herself to be governed by whims, in an unheard-of manner, and now gave him, too, a disagreeable taste of that haughtiness of which he had never before been conscious. Yes, this frosty reserve amounted to rudeness, and he was not disposed to submit to it long. Deeply chagrined, he followed every movement of her hand, every inclination of her body, as well as the changing expression of her face, and the more he became absorbed in the contemplation of this proud creature the more beautiful, the more perfect he found her, and the higher rose his desire to see her smile again, to see her once more look as sweet and womanly as she had done the evening before. Now she was like nothing but an exquisite marble statue, but, for all this he knew that she possessed a soul, and what a glorious task, to free, as it were from herself, this being so swayed by foolish whims, and to show her—with harshness, if need be—what becomes a woman and a maiden.

While under the sway of these contending emotions, his attention became more and more exclusively fixed upon the young girl, and his mother—who sat upon a sofa with her friend Susannah at some distance from the players—remarked this with increasing vexation, and sought to lure him away from her by questions, and charging him with little errands, and to prevent others from observing his striking preoccupation.

Who would have thought yesterday morning that her darling could so soon give her so much anxiety and annoyance?

Just as his father and she had wished, he had come home a self-contained man, familiar with the ways of the world. It is true that in the metropolis he had enjoyed everything that appeals to the taste of a young man of noble birth, but for all that—and this was what gave his father the keenest gratification—for all that he had preserved unimpaired the freshness

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and acuteness of his sensibilities. Not a trace was to be discerned in him of that satiety and inability to enjoy life that was so commonly seen at home among those of his rank and age. He could play just as merrily as ever with little Maria, or enjoy a rare flower or fine new horse just as intensely as before he became a traveler, and at the same time had gained so deep an insight into the political complications of the period, the condition of the empire and court, the administration of affairs and ecclesiastical innovations, that it furnished matter of delight for his father simply to listen to his talk, and he could assure his wife that he had gotten many an idea from the fellow, and that Orion was in a fair way to become an accomplished statesman, and, indeed, was already furnished with all the materials for one.

The mother had no sooner named the great sum that Orion had left owing in Constantinople than the old gentleman put his hand into his purse with a certain pride; yes, it delighted him to find that the only heir left to him knew how to use that great wealth which, so far as himself was concerned, just as well as he had done in the days of his youth, and how to surround himself with a splendor that reflected luster upon himself and his name. "With him," said the sick man, "you get some return for your money. His horses cost a great deal, but he knows how to bear off the palm with them; his apparel swallows up pretty sums, yet it brings him consideration wherever he appears. Here, for instance, he brings me a letter from Senator Justinus, and the worthy man acknowledges that he has "carried a wide row" among the young men of wealth and fashion in the capital. A compliment of that kind is not to be despised, and after all it has been obtained cheaply enough. Why need we call in question a few hundred talents the more or the less, and there is something grand in his having the spirit not to do so either."

And he who said this was no jovial old graybeard, but a man broken in health, who, however, rejoiced to see his son relish enjoyments, of which he had long since been forbidden himself to taste.

And the fiery, highly endowed youth just emerged from boyhood, whom he had sent to the imperial city, with some solicitude, must, on the whole, have led a much more regular life than could have been expected of him. To this bore testimony the ruddy glow upon his rather sunburned cheeks, the swelling power of his muscles and the fullness of his sleek, but at the same time, artificially curled hair, which, after the fashion of the day fell in short ringlets over his lofty brow, and imparted

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to him a certain resemblance to the statues of Antinous, the handsomest youth in the days of the Emperor Hadrian.

The mother agreed, too, that her newly arrived son was the very picture of health, and no member of the imperial family could be clothed more richly, studiedly and fashionably than her darling. But in the simplest possible garb he would have been a handsome, splendid-looking fellow, such as any mother must be proud of.

When he had exchanged home-life for a residence in the capital, there had been something about him that smacked of the provincial, but now his manners had become perfectly polished, and wherever he appeared, even at court, he was sure of attracting attention among the first people.

And what a life he had led in that great city! Events enough for a century had followed each other with startling rapidity during the thirty months of his sojourn. The higher the excitement the greater the satisfaction, yclept pastime, and if, on the Bosphorus he had rioted and reveled like any other, yet the pleasures of the table, love-making, chariot racing with his own victorious steeds, which he had richly enjoyed, had been but child's play compared to the shock which his nerves had sustained when he had stood as spectator in the midst of public events the most astounding. Wretched gratification that of the chariot race at Alexandria! Whether his own horses won or those of Timon or Ptolemaus, what signified it? In the circus at Byzantium, too, it had been splendid to bear off the palm, but there were agitations of soul here far more intense than any concerning chariot or horse. How harmless a thing to come home from church in the valley of the Nile! But let one cross the threshold of the cathedral of St. Sophia at Byzantium, and ten to one he was carried home with broken bones, or bleeding wounds, if not as a corpse.

Thrice had he seen a change of rulers. An emperor and empress had been divested of the purple before his eyes and mutilated.

There, then, the sensations experienced had been verily trying. As for the rest? Yes, that too had been entertaining enough. He had not been received like any other Egyptian: half taught philosophers, who called themselves wise men, deported themselves mysteriously with pompous ceremoniousness; astrologers, rhetoricians, wretched but sharp and venomous wits, physicians bragging of their fathers' skill, fanatical theologians, always ready, in their imbittered religious controversies, to make use of other weapons than those of first principles and dogmas, dirty hermits, neglected mentally and

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bodily, corn-dealers and usurers, with whom it was dangerous to close a bargain without witnesses—with all these Orion had had nothing to do. As the bright, gay, handsome son of the rich and famous governor, the renowned Mukaukas, he had been received indeed as a sort of embassador, and had his share in every enjoyment partaken of by the noble youth of the imperial city. His purse was as richly lined as theirs; his health and energy twenty times greater, and three times had his horses outstripped theirs, he holding the reins, no paid driver. The "rich Egyptian," the "new Antinous," the "handsome Orion," as he was called, could not be spared at any feast, any place of amusement. The first houses in the city gladly counted him among their guests, and in the palace and villa of the Senator Justinus, a friend of his father in the days of their youth, he was treated like the son of the house. At his house and under the auspices of his friendly wife Martina, he also made the acquaintance of the fair Heliodora, the widow of a nephew to the senator, and the whole town had talked of the *liaison* between Orion and this graceful young woman, whose severe virtue had hitherto been no less admired than her blonde hair and the immense jewels with which she loved to adorn her otherwise simple but costly garments.

Many a fair Byzantine had sought to win the favor of the young Egyptian, until Heliodora had driven them all from the field. But she had not succeeded in making a deep and lasting impression upon Orion, and when he had assured his mother, the evening before, that his heart was not hers, he had told her the truth. To be sure his proceedings in the capital had not been exemplary, but he had never gone far astray, and enjoyed the respect not only of his boon companions, but of the grave and dignified men whom he had met in the house of Justinus, and who praised his intellect and love of knowledge. He had not in the least degree omitted musical culture while in the imperial city, and there attained to a rare perfection both in singing and playing on the lute.

His father's mode of action had seriously imperiled his safety, but he found no fault with him on that score; for, in the depths of his heart he approved of his course, since he had himself been a witness a thousand times to the contempt in which the Greeks held the Egyptians, the hatred and abhorrence with which the orthodox regarded the Monophysitic Confession of his people.

With ill-suppressed rage he had been compelled to listen to the ridicule and abuse inconsiderately poured out in his presence upon his country and countrymen, by noblemen small

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and great, laity and clergy; they deeming him one of themselves, a Greek, to whom everything "barbarous" was just as repugnant and despicable as to themselves.

But in the veins of this "modern Antinous" who knew how to render Greek songs so beautifully and with so pure an accent, flowed the blood of his ancestors, and any invective aimed at his own people stamped itself indelibly upon his heart; every defamation of his faith recalled to his memory the day upon which the Melchites had murdered his two brothers.

Those countless deeds of blood and violence, with which the Greeks had provoked, insulted and goaded to death Egyptians of a different creed, had now been avenged, avenged by his father. This exhilarated him, made him proud, and he suffered the old man to look into the depths of his spirit, and what he found there at once enraptured and surprised him, for he had feared that in Constantinople Orion would not be able wholly to escape the mighty influence of the winning Greek nature; indeed, he had often felt oppressed by anxiety, lest his own son might disapprove of his having handed over the province intrusted to him to the Arab conquerors, and concluded peace with them, even under compulsion.

Now the Mukaukas felt that himself and Orion were of one mind, and from his draught-board every now and then he would cast at him an affectionate glance.

The Lady Nephoris endeavored, as best she could, to entertain the mother of her son's future bride, and to divert her attention from his singular behavior; and in this she had every appearance of succeeding, for that lady entered into everything that she was saying; but it was made manifest that she was keeping a sharp lookout upon all that was going on, suddenly putting the question as to "Whether she thought her husband's lofty niece would think it worth her while to exchange a word or two with them?"

"Oh, no," answered Nephoris, bitterly. "I only hope that she will soon find other people to whom she may show herself more condescending. Depend upon it, I shall smooth her path in that direction!" Then she turned the conversation upon Catharine, and told the widow that her brother-in-law was in Memphis with his two little daughters. They were to go away again the next day, and so her child had had to devote herself to them. "And so there sits the poor little girl now," lamented she, "and has to keep those two little chatter-boxes quiet, while she is longing to be here."

Orion had caught these last words, asked after the little girl, and then said, cheerfully:

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"She promised me early yesterday morning to make me a collar for the white dog I have brought back with me for a memento of Constantinople. Fy, Maria! you are not to torment the poor little animal!"

"Yes, let the dog go!" added the widow, while she turned to the Mukaukas's granddaughter, who wanted to force the little beast to kiss her doll whether or no. "But, you know, Orion, that little pet is much too pretty for a great man like yourself. Give it to a sweet young girl, and then it will fulfill its destiny! As for the rest, Catharine is already at work upon the collar. Properly, I ought not to betray her secret, but golden stars are coming out upon a blue ground."

"Because Orion is a star," exclaimed little Maria; "she embroiders nothing but Orions!"

"Happily there is only one constellation of my name," remarked he. "Tell that, please, to your daughter, good neighbor Susan."

Hereupon Maria clapped her hands and laughed. "He will have no star beside himself!"

And the widow cut her short abruptly: "Little minx! I know people who can not bear to be told that they resemble anybody else. But this time you must be pleased, Orion. Yes, you were quite right just now, Nephoris, his brow and mouth are cut, as it were, from one block with his father's."

This remark was correct, and yet there could hardly have been a stronger contrast than between this vigorous young man and yon languid elderly man reclining there upon the divan, whose energies were evidently taxed by the slight movements required by the game. Once the Mukaukas would well have borne comparison with his son, but that time had long since passed by. A few gray locks now covered only partially the bald pate, and of his eyes —which thirty years ago might have compared in brilliancy with those of Orion—there was usually nothing, and many a time little to be seen, for the heavy lids continually drooped over them as though they had no support, and gave a weird expression to the well-formed, pallid countenance. He did not look morose, however, rather pain and benevolence had combined upon his features to express melancholy only. The mouth and limp, flabby cheeks were rigid and corpse-like. The paralyzing hands of grief, anxiety, and care seemed to have passed over them and left their impress there. He looked like a man wearied to death, who only continued to live because fate denied him the boon of dying. Yes, he had often been taken for a corpse by his family when he had dipped too frequently into a certain little box of blood-

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stone, and taken too many of the little white pellets of opium, which formed its contents. One of these he had laid upon his colorless lips at long intervals while he was engaged at draughts.

Slowly, and like one dreaming, he moved piece after piece, and yet his partner could gain no advantage over her superior antagonist, and had been beaten by him now for the third time, although the Mukaukas himself called her a good player. It was written upon her high, pure brow, and seen in the straightforward look of her deep blue eyes, that she could think clearly and to the point, as also feel keenly. But she seemed to be self-willed and opinionated—at least this evening—for if Orion pointed out to her this or that move she seldom followed his advice, but with firmly compressed lips moved the little piece according to her own, seldom wiser, judgment. It was evident that she was not in a mood to be guided by this particular counselor.

All present could but observe the forbidding manner of the girl, but as well Orion's eagerness to conciliate her; and for this reason his mother was glad when, after the Mukaukas had won the third game and with the back of his hand swept together confusedly all the pieces left upon the board, the herald reminded his master of the Arab who was waiting outside with growing impatience. The Mukaukas nodded instead of making any reply, then drew a long scarf of finest woolen stuff more closely about his person, and pointed to the doors and ceiling of the apartment. His friends had long since been incommoded by the damp night air which had swept through the room, blowing up from the river; but because they knew that nothing was more painful to the Mukaukas than the heat of summer, the draught had been cheerfully endured by them all. Now Orion called to some slaves, and before the strangers entered the doors and opening in the roof had been closed.

The governor's partner arose, and Mukaukas on the other hand remained lying motionless, and constantly kept his eyes covered by their lids; nevertheless he must have perceived what was going on around him through an invisible rift, for he turned to Paula in the first place, and then to the other ladies as well, and said:

"Is it not strange? in other cases old people and children seek the sun, the one set playing, the other resting gladly in its heat. But I—something came over me years ago—you know all about it—and then it was that my blood was frozen. Now it will not get warm any more; and I feel the contrast between the cold in here and the heat outside very sensibly, almost painfully. The older one grows the more willingly one

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deputes to youth what used to give pleasure to one's self; the only thing that we old people do not gladly part with is bodily comfort; and thanks to you all for patiently submitting to be incommoded, nay, voluntarily preferring my wishes to your own. A dreadful summer! You, Paula, know what ice is from your Lebanon. Many a time have I wished for a bed of snow. It were the height of my desire to know naught but coolness—refreshing coolness. The breeze that you dread is delicious to me. The warmth of youth struggles against all that is cool."

This was the first long sentence that the Mukaukas had spoken since the beginning of the game. Orion allowed him respectfully to finish his remarks, but then added, smilingly: "Meanwhile there are young people who take pleasure in being cool and frosty, for what reason Heaven only knows!"

So saying, he looked full into the eyes of her for whom those words were meant; but she turned from him silently and proudly, and a shadow of indignation flitted across her lovely features.

CHAPTER V.

THE AUDIENCE.

After admission to the Mukaukas had been granted the Arab, his servants spread out a piece of tapestry before the sufferer.

The gigantic Masdakite did the main part of the work; but no sooner did the Mukaukas take notice of the powerful man with the bushy, lion-like hair, whose girdle bristled with daggers and a battle-ax, than he called out, in distressful tones:

"Out, out with him! That man, those weapons— I will not look at the tapestry until he is out of the way!"

At the same time his hands trembled, and the merchant instantly ordered his trusty Hassan, the most harmless of men, to withdraw. Now composure quickly returned to the governor, who had now and then been subject to similar nervous attacks ever since a murderous attempt had been made upon his life by a Greek banished from Egypt, and full of admiration, he gazed upon the tapestry, about which his family was grouped. Each one acknowledged that he or she had never seen anything like it before, and the sprightly widow Susannah wanted to have her daughter called, together with her guests, yet the hour was already late, and her house so far from the governor's mansion that she was diverted from her purpose.

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Father and son had heard already of this wonderful work of art which had been captured by the victorious Arabian army at the overthrow of the Persian Empire, in "the white palace," the royal residence at Madain, the capital of the Sassanides. They knew that it had been originally three hundred yards long and sixty yards broad, and had heard with indignation that the Caliph Omar, who still slept, dressed and eat like a plain leader of caravans, and looked down upon such articles of luxury with contempt, had cut up this priceless treasure into pieces and shared it out among the prophet's associates.

The merchant explained now that this piece of tapestry had fallen to Ali, the prophet's son-in-law, as his share of the booty. He had himself seen the wonderful work entire at Madain, where it hung on the wall of the glorious throne-room, and later too at Medina before it was cut up.

Those present eagerly urged him to describe the part now missing; but he seemed to feel uneasy, looking frequently at his naked feet, that stood upon the mosaic pavement made damp by the splashing of the fountain, for he had left his sandals in the ante-chamber in obedience to the customs of his people.

The governor had followed the motions of the old gentleman, who often carried his hand to his lips, and while his wife, Orion, and the widow besieged Haschim with questions, he had whispered a few words to a slave. Immediately afterward the last named had returned, and by order of his master spread out a longish strip of carpet before the brown but delicately formed feet of the Arab.

While this was being done a peculiar alteration took place in the merchant's manner. With a dignity of which no one would have deemed him capable who had seen the humility with which he had entered the room and recommended his costly goods with ready address, he drew himself up, while an expression of contentment spread over his placid countenance, a sweet smile played about his mouth, and moisture gleamed in his kindly eyes as in those of a child for whom an unexpected pleasure has been prepared. Then he bowed low before the Mukaukas, while with the finger-tips of his right hand he touched forehead, mouth, and breast, as much as to say, "What I think, speak, and feel is at your service," and said, "I thank you, son of Menas; that was the deed of a Moslem!"

"Of a Christian," eagerly corrected Orion; but at this his father gently shook his head and said, emphatically and slowly:

"Only that of a man!"

"Of a man," repeated the merchant, and then continued,

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thoughtfully, "of a man! Yes, that is indeed the highest, so long as we are what we ought to be—creatures made in the image of the one only God. Who is more merciful than He? and every merciful one born of woman is like Him."

"There again a Christian saying, you queer Moslem!" interposed Orion.

"And nevertheless," added Haschim, with quiet dignity, "it gives, word for word, the teachings of that best of men, our prophet. I am one of those who knew him when on earth. The very smallest pain suffered by a brother touched his tender heart with friendly sympathy; his law requires that mercy be bestowed even upon the tree by the road-side; it calls it a deadly sin to injure one, and every Moslem must obey the precept. To exercise mercy is called in the book of the prophet—"

Here the merchant was suddenly and rashly interrupted, for Paula, who had hitherto been leaning against a pilaster inspecting the tapestry and silently following the thread of the conversation, now took two quick steps forward toward the Arabian, and with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes pointed her finger at him and cried out, in a quivering voice, not heeding the astonished and indignant looks of the company and the little dog that barked furiously at the Arab:

"You, you, the professor of that lying prophet's creed! you the confederate of that blood-hound, Chalid! you, and merciful! I know you! I know your practices in Syria! With these eyes I have seen you and your blood-thirsty women with the foam upon their raving lips! Here I stand as witness against you, and accuse you to your face! You have broken faith at Damascus, and murdered with the sword, and strangled with your hands the victims of your treachery—defenseless women and tender children. You, you—the apostle of mercy—have you heard nothing of Abyla? You, friend of your prophet, who so graciously spare the way-side tree, what had those people at Abyla done to you that you should have slaughtered their innocents? You, you, and merciful!"

So saying, the passionate girl, to whom nobody had shown mercy, broke forth into a bitter laugh and flung her arms wildly about, as though driving away a swarm of gad-flies. The word "merciful" had fallen upon her ears with the effect of stinging irony, tortured as she had been for hours by a deep sense of wrong, with difficulty held under restraint, and it seemed to afford some alleviation of misery to give free bent to the anguish that was rending her soul.

What a woman!

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Orion's glances hung upon her with shuddering, and yet he was enraptured. Yes, his mother had rightly divined her nature. No good, soft-hearted girl laughed in that way; but grand, glorious, wonderful she was, even in her anger. She reminded him of a statue of the goddess of vengeance, which he had seen at Constantinople, executed by Apelles. His mother, shrugging her shoulders, exchanged a knowing glance with the widow; but his father too felt disturbed by the spectacle that she presented. He knew what was moving her, yet felt that he durst not let her have her way, and brought the excited girl to recollection as he, half reproachfully, half in a tone of commiseration, called her by name—at first in a low tone, then more loudly and sternly.

She started like a somnambulist who is suddenly awakened from his partial slumber, drew her hands across her eyes and said, as she bowed low before the Mukaukas:

"Pardon me, uncle; it grieves me that it has happened so, but it was stronger than I. You know what lies behind me; and when I am reminded of it by hearing the praises of those dreadful men who tore from me both father and brother—"

Her violent sobbing stemmed the tide of her discourse, and little Maria nestled up to her weeping from sympathy; but Orion had to use great self-restraint to hinder himself from hastening to her and clasping her in his arms. Oh! how well feminine weakness became that grand being, how it drew him to her!

But Paula did not long succumb to feeling; for, even while the governor was comforting her with friendly words, she gained the mastery over her strong agitation, and gently implored, amid silently flowing tears:

"Let me go to my own room, please!"

"Good-night, then, my dear," cordially responded the Mukaukas; and now she turned back from the door to salute the others in silence; but the Moslem detained her, saying:

"I know who you are, noble daughter of Thomas, and I have learned that your brother was the bridegroom who had come to Abyla in order to solemnize there his marriage with the daughter of the prefect of Tripoli. Alas, that I, while attending mass in the pursuance of my calling, should have been the shocked witness of a crazy band of my own soldiers falling upon that peaceful town. Poor, poor child! Your father was the greatest and bravest of all our foes. Whether on earth or in heaven he assuredly respects our prowess, as we do his. But your brother, who was hurried to death as a bridegroom, he cursed us with his dying breath; and you are

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the inheritor of his hatred, and if it asserts itself proudly against me, the Moslem, I can do nothing but bow in acquiescence, and expiate the guilt of those whose blood I share, as well as their creed. I know not how to advance any apology, noble maiden, for the evil deed done at Abyla, for only there did I experience the deep humiliation—believe me, young lady, it grieved me so sorely—of having to be ashamed of my own party. War, the memory of many a wounded friend, and wealth lightly plundered had unchained passion, and where passion holds sway, be it in battle over mine and thine or over the possessions of others, it matters not, ever since the days of Cain and Abel it has been the same old story over and over again."

Here Paula, who had all this while been standing opposite to the old man without stirring, shook her head and said, bitterly:

"All this does not give me back my father and brother. You yourself look like a mild-tempered man, yet if you are as just as kindly disposed, be sure of your company before you talk about the mercy of the Moslems."

So saying, she once more bade good-night and left the room. Orion followed her, for whatever ensued he must speak with her. Yet after a few minutes he returned breathing deeply and with his teeth firmly clinched. He had seized her hand, wanting to pour into her ear the utterances of a heart overflowing with love; but how sharply, how frigidly had he been repulsed, and with what an insufferably contemptuous mien had she turned her back upon him! And now that he again found himself in the bosom of his family, he hardly heard his father express his regret that so painful an occurrence should have taken place under his roof, and the Arab declare that he could very well understand how the orphan of Thomas should be beside herself from grief. The crime at Abyla was inexcusable.

"But in what warfare," continued the old man, "does not the like happen? Even Christ is not always master of Himself; you yourself, I know, have lost two blooming sons, and who were the murderers? Why, Christians, your own brethren in the faith—"

"The bitterest foes of my own particular faith," slowly answered the governor, deliberately, as though each syllable rejected coolly and proudly the insinuation of the Moslem that the creed of those who had murdered his sons could be his, and at the same time his eyes opened wide and assumed the appearance of those hard opaque stones which his forefathers used to

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set for eyes in the faces of statues. Then they slowly closed again, and he continued, carelessly, "What price do you set upon your tapestry? I have a desire to purchase it. Name your lowest price. I hate chaffering."

"I had it in my mind to charge five hundred thousand drachmas," answered the dealer. "You may have it for four hundred thousand."

The governor's wife clasped her hands at the mention of this sum, made gestures of warning for her husband to see, and then shook her head disapprovingly, when Orion, who had roused himself by great exertion, and wanted to show that he too was taking an interest in this magnificent transaction, said:

"It is well worth three hundred thousand."

"Four hundred thousand," repeated the merchant, composedly. "Your father requested to know the lowest price, and I am asking no more than is just. Those rubies and garnets forming that bunch of grapes there, these pearls here among those myrtles, those turquoises in the forget-me-nots, those diamonds up there that hang like dew-drops on the blades of grass, the emeralds which lend brilliancy to the green foliage, and most especially this incomparable jewel, if sold singly would bring a higher price."

"Why then have you not cut them out of the fabric?" asked the Lady Nephoris.

"Because I had a repugnance to destroying this noble work," replied the Moslem. "I shall sell it just as it is, or not at all."

At these words the governor beckoned to his son, without heeding the disapprobation which his wife had not ceased to testify, asking to have handed to him a little tablet that lay by the chess-board. He wrote a few words upon it and said, as he handed it to the dealer: "Our bargain is closed. Early to-morrow morning the rent-master Nilus will settle with you for it upon the presentation of this writing."

A new emotion now took possession of Orion, and with the cry, "Glorious, glorious!" he rushed up to his father and impulsively kissed his hand. Then he turned to his mother, chucked her under the chin, kissed her upon the brow, for her eyes swam in tears of chagrin, and exclaimed, proudly and rapturously: "Thus deal we, and the emperor!"

Hereupon he drew nearer to the Moslem and said: "When the father is the most magnanimous of men the son easily becomes insignificant. No offense meant, worthy sir! As for your tapestry, grant that it be more precious than all the treasures of Crœsus, but you must throw one thing into the bar-

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gain before you laden your camels with our gold. How did this work of art look before it was cut into pieces?"

The Moslem, who had slipped the valuable tablet into his girdle, accepted this challenge without delay.

"You know its immense length and breadth originally," he began. "The hall which it draped accommodated many thousands of guests, besides furnishing standing room for hundreds of guardsmen on either side of the throne. As many weavers, embroiderers, and jewelers as there are days in the year are reported to have worked on the tapestry for a whole generation. The woven painting represented paradise, such as the Persians fancy it, full of green, blooming and fruit-bearing trees. Here you still see a part of the fresh fountain, which when viewed from afar, looked exactly like sparkling fresh water, with its setting of diamonds, sapphires and emeralds. Here these pearls represent the white foam on a wave. Those sundered leaves there belong to the rose-bush that grew at Eden's fountain before the calamity of its first rain had befallen the world. Originally it bore only white blossoms, but when they were surpassed in fairness by the limbs of the first women, its white flowers blushed for shame, and since then there have been crimson roses just as well. So the Persians say."

"And this, our piece?" asked Orion.

"It belonged to the center of the tapestry," replied the merchant, looking complacently upon the young man. "Quite to the left the judgment-seat was to be seen on the bridge Tschinvat. The condemned were not represented, but the winged Fravaschi, those genii, who, according to the Persian faith, as guardian angels attend through life every mortal in his own shape, one with him and, at the same time, distinct. One had them before him, as, in wild career, they pursued the condemned evil-doers, attendants of the dark Angramainjus, whom one must imagine as hosts fleeing before them. Triumphantly the blessed, pure and true friends of Ahuramasda, the god of light, advanced into the blooming garden of delights, and at their feet were seen those who were not quite condemned and at the same time not fully acquitted. With bowed heads, humbly and silently they vanished within the recesses of a dismal grove. In blissful tranquillity the pure enjoyed the gifts of Paradise. All this was explained to me by a priest of the fire-worshipers. Here you see one of the blessed reaching out after a huge bunch of grapes. His hand remains there intact, but his arm, alas! has been lopped off. Of that wreath of flowers and fruits, which encircled the whole as a frame, a splendid speci-

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men remains here. The emerald forming that bud, what should you say was its worth?"

"A wonderful gem!" exclaimed Orion. "Heliodora herself has not its match. Well, father, what say you as to its value?"

"It is worth a great deal, a very great deal," answered he, "and yet were this work of art complete as at first, it were too small a gift for the one for whom I destined it."

"For General Amr, do you mean?" asked Orion.

"No, my son," replied the governor, decidedly. "For the exalted, indivisible, divine person of Jesus Christ and His Church."

Crest-fallen, Orion looked down at these words. The thought of seeing this glorious gem vanish within the recesses of some dark closet where relics were stowed away was repugnant to his feelings. He could have disposed of it to far greater advantage!

Yet neither father nor mother observed his disapproval; for Nephoris had rushed up to the couch of her husband, had thrown herself down before it, while she covered his cold slender hand with kisses, rejoicing as though this determination lifted from her a load of anguish.

"Our souls, our souls, George! For the sake of such a gift —just wait—all will be forgiven you, and you will win back your long-lost repose."

The governor silently shrugged his shoulders, let the tapestry be folded and locked up by Orion in the *tablinum*, and finally directed the chamberlain to give the Arab and his followers quarters for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

MUKAUKAS GEORGE, "THE GOOD, THE JUST."

It had indeed been anguish of spirit and scruples of conscience that had occasioned the governor to purchase the tapestry, and so it would perhaps have pleased him if it had been even dearer. The greater the gift the better founded was hope of favor and acceptance with the recipient!

And he had cause to be uneasy and ask himself whether he had done right. To take revenge was no Christian act, but still he had not been able to bring himself to leave unpunished what the Melchites had done to him when the opportunity to ruin them occurred; but then what father would have found this possible, whose two blooming sons had been murdered?

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This dreadful blow had fallen upon him in the heyday of life, Since then he had felt his vital powers gradually declining, and that sense of weakness too, those wretched nervous attacks, the discomforts and pains which made every hour a weariness. he must lay to the account of the Melchite rulers.

The languishing life of this man had only continued thus long perforce of its original fullness of vigor and that consuming thirst for revenge. And fate had allowed him to slake it in a manner that finally seemed too violent for one of his pacific temperament.

Although not through his fault, yet with his complicity, he had seen the Byzantine Empire lose the rich province that the emperor had intrusted to his charge; he had seen the Greeks and everything named Melchite driven out of Egypt, and—what he would gladly have prevented—slaughtered like mad dogs by the infuriated mob that had welcomed the Moslems as deliverers.

Thus every evil that he had wished the murderers of his sons, the tormentors and oppressors of his people, had befallen them, and his vengeance had been only too complete; but in the midst of the joy felt at this rare gratification of ardent wishes, pent up for years, his conscience had lifted up its voice, and new anxieties had come to him such as he had never before experienced. He lacked the strength of soul constituting the hero or reformer. Too great a result had been effected by him, too terrible a fate overtaken thousands; what he prized the most, the Christian faith, had been too sorely imperiled by him for him to be able, composedly, to endure the thought of having occasioned so much wrong. The responsibility which all this brought with it proved itself to be too heavy for his shoulders, and as often as he repeated to himself that he had not invited the Arabs to the country, and that he had lacked power to expel them, he heard himself on all sides designated as the one who had delivered up to them his native land; and now he saw himself threatened from all quarters, believing those who told him of assassins whom the Byzantines had sent out against him. But more tormenting yet was his dread of the wrath of Heaven against him who had handed over a Christian land to the infidel. The consciousness of having been his life long a well-meaning, just man did him no good in face of this distress, and there was only one means that uplifted his depressed spirits, viz., those little white pellets that had long since become as indispensable to him as air and water.

The friendly old Bishop Plotinus of Memphis had for-

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giveness for everything; the Patriarch Benjamin, who, during his banishment had from the desert pointed to the Arabs as redeemers from the tyranny of the Melchites, to whose recall and reinstatement he had mainly contributed, and for whose approval he had hoped, on the contrary had treated him as a castaway, one fallen under a sentence of eternal damnation, and if he, the Mukaukas, penetrated into the motives which led the princes of the Church to take this view of the matter, yet he believed that Benjamin's office of shepherd lent him the power to close the gates of heaven against every sheep of his fold.

The more securely he saw the Arabs settled in his native city, the more intelligently rule there, the more Egyptian Christians he saw transfer their fealty from the cross to the crescent, the more heinous seemed to him his crime; and when, after the completion of his work of vengeance that the Greeks styled "double treason," instead of God's judgments felling him down, everything came to him that men call happiness and good fortune, the believer dreaded lest this be Satan's pay, into whose arms so many Christian souls had been driven through his quickly concluded treaty of peace with the Moslems.

Two great fortunes had unexpectedly been left him. His treasure-diggers in the city of the dead had exhumed from the old heathen tombs more gold, silver and precious stones than all the rest put together. The Moslem caliph and his vicegerents had left him in office, and shown him friendship and honor; the city magistrates had bestowed upon him the epithet of "the just" amid the plaudits of the assembled citizens, and his estates had never brought him in greater rents. From the widow of his eldest murdered son he had received letters written in her convent, full of rapture over the higher aim of existence which she had found. His grandchild, her daughter, was a child of such remarkable promise as to evoke the admiration even of strangers, and his son's frequent letters from Constantinople had proved to him that he was improving in every respect, and at the same time was mindful of his parents; for he never failed, voluntarily, to acquaint them with every gratification that he experienced, every benefit that he was reaping.

Even in that foreign land he had lived with his father and mother, esteeming them as his dearest and best.

And Paula! His wife could not warm toward her, yet he considered her presence in the house as a pleasant circumstance to which he was indebted for many agreeable hours—not only those spent at draughts.

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All this, to be sure, might be a gift of Satan, but if this were the case, he, the Mukaukas George, wanted to show the Evil One now that he was not devoted to him, but the Saviour, in whose mercy he hoped. And with what fervent gratitude to the Almighty was his soul filled for the safe return home of such a son. His whole being urged him to give expression to this feeling, and thus gratitude as well as remorse had occasioned him to devote so vast a sum to making an unparalleled present to the Church of Christ. He had compared himself to a prisoner of war, whose ransom money has arrived, while he handed to the merchant the tablet inscribed with his draft, and when he was carried to his chamber for the night, and his wife unweariedly thanked him for his pious project, he felt more cheerful and lighter hearted than he had done for years.

At other times he was accustomed to hear Paula moving about in the chamber overhead, which happened to be the apartment assigned her; for she retired late, and in the stillness of the night loved to indulge in reveries of a sweet as well as busy nature. Of how much had a bitter fate deprived her! father, brother, her nearest relatives and friends all at once, all through the instrumentality of the Moslems, to whom he had abandoned his native land almost unresistingly.

"We don't hear Paula to-night," said he, looking upward, as if he felt the want of something. "Most likely the poor thing has lain down to rest after the excitement of that scene just now."

"Let her alone," answered his wife, who was not pleased to be interrupted in the outpourings of her joy, while she shrugged her shoulders angrily. "How she did behave! We had to hear a great deal too much on the subject of mercy. Now I do not mean to praise my own, yet I love to exercise it, and besides it is my plain duty to show a desolate relation of yours every kindness; but this girl! She does make it too hard for me, and I am no more than human. I can not be glad to see her: when she comes into the room it seems as if misfortune herself crossed the threshold. And then! You have no eyes for such things, but Orion has more to do with her than is for his good. I do wish she was out of the house!"

"Nephoris!" burst forth her husband, in a tone of gentle reproach, and he would gladly have reprimanded her more sternly, but since he had become a slave to opium he could no longer oppose her energetically, whether in a trifle or some great matter.

Soon the Mukaukas lay in an uneasy slumber, yet he opened his eyes more frequently than usual. There was missing over-

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head that light step to which he had been used for two years past; but she who was accustomed to pace the floor there the early part of the night had not retired to rest as he had supposed.

She had indeed, after what had happened, sought her chamber with glowing cheeks and burning eyes; but the maids, who paid little heed to the wishes of a guest, endured but evidently disliked by their mistress, had not obeyed her direction that the windows of her apartment should be opened after sundown to admit the cooler night air, and now the room felt stiflingly warm and sultry. The wooden shutters felt hot to her touch, as did also the linen sheets spread over the woolen of the couch. The water in her pitcher, and even the pocket-handkerchief she picked up, were warm. To an Egyptian woman all this would have been nothing uncommon, but the Damascus girl had passed every summer in her father's beautiful country residence on the heights of Lebanon, where it was light and cheerful as well as cool and shady.

Out-of-doors it was pleasant; she had found it so below, and so, without stopping long to consider, she pushed open the blinds, muffled herself in a long, dark mantle, glided down the steep stairs and then through a servants' gate known to her down into the yard.

There she drew a deep breath and stretched out her arms wistfully, as if she longed to fly far, far away; but soon she let them drop, and looked around.

She had not merely gone out-of-doors in search of coolness; no, she felt a peculiar longing to open her indignant, overburdened heart to some one; and in the servants' quarters two beings, one of whom understood, appreciated and loved her, and another who felt for her the devotion of a faithful dog, and executed commissions for her that were to be kept secret from the governor's mansion and its inmates.

The one was her nurse, who had accompanied her to Egypt, the other the freed equerry of her father, who had attended the ladies with his half-grown son, and protected them when they had emerged from their hiding-place after the massacre of Abyla, and after a long stay in a valley of Lebanon had found no better counsel to give them than to flee into Egypt and there place himself under the protection of the Mukaukas George, whose sister had been her father's first wife. She herself came from a second marriage with a Syrian lady of rank, who had been a cousin of the Emperor Heraclius, and who had died young, shortly after her birth. She had been parted from both her servants.

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The nurse, Perpetua, had been employed by the governor's wife—who had been quick to recognize in her an unusually skillful weaver—to superintend the female slaves of the house busied at the loom, and the old woman had gladly undertaken this office, although she was of free birth, for she would have put up with anything for the sake of remaining in the neighborhood of her beloved foster-child.

The equerry, Hiram, with his son, had also been added to the retinue of the Mukaukas, in the first place that he might attend to the five fine horses from her father's stable, which the fugitives had brought with them to Egypt, but moreover—for his valuable qualities, too, had been speedily recognized—to be referred to as a veterinary surgeon and trainer of horses.

Paula wished to speak with both these, and knew exactly where to find them, yet could not reach them without exposing herself to what was disagreeable, for the Mukaukas's freemen, their friends, and now, after the shutting of the gates, the soldiers of the watch, were still sitting about in different groups, chatting together, and certainly would not speedily separate, for some slaves were just now bringing the watchmen their supper.

Coming and going still continued in the yard, for every one who could enjoyed the coolness of the night. Only the slaves were not among this number, since, immediately after the locking of the gates they had been sent to their own abodes; yet from their quarters, too, voices still made themselves heard.

Paula, with beating heart, sought to take in everything within reach of her sharp eyes and ears. The waxing moon lighted up one half of the court, the other lay in darkness as far as the shadow of the governor's mansion extended. In the midst of the first semi-circle, where the freedmen had grouped themselves together, burned a fire that cast varying lights upon their brown features, and when it was fed with fresh fuel leaped up high and lighted up also the dark part of the broad space in front of her. This increased the trepidation of the anxiously watchful girl, who had to traverse the court, and yet durst not be observed; for, innocent and natural as was all that she planned, she knew, nevertheless, that her uncle's wife would shamefully misinterpret her nocturnal stroll.

In the beginning Nephoris had called upon her husband to second Paula in her inquiries after her father, of whose death nobody had certain proof; but the lady's exhortation had not been necessary, for her husband had voluntarily devoted a full year to investigations both among Christians and Moslems as to the life or death of the missing man, yet for many months

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any further effort in this direction had been declared folly by the Lady Nephoris in the first place, and soon afterward her weak husband had adopted her view and given up for lost one who had disappeared utterly.

Without personal sacrifice the governor had saved for her a great deal of her father's property, sold the landed estate to her advantage, collected outstanding debts where it was still possible, and wanted to render her an account of all that he had won back. But she knew that her property was safe in his hands, and she was satisfied with the communication that although she was not rich in the sense of the Egyptian Crœsus, she was nevertheless in possession of a considerable fortune. When once and again she asked for a portion of this, in order to prosecute investigations, the Mukaukas had immediately counted out to her the money she wished for. The third time, on the contrary, he refused, with all firmness, to do as she desired, through a good motive. In so doing he called himself her *Kyrios** and natural guardian, declaring it to be his duty to hinder her from gratifying a whim, because this vain quest had been pursued long enough to consume means that would one day be welcome to her—yes, probably necessary. The amount hitherto expended he had contributed from his own coffers. She felt this as a noble deed, yet she urged him again and again to let her have her way, but so far in vain, for with all determination he laid his hand upon the property intrusted to him, and would allow her not a stiver more for the sole, dearest aim of her life.

She apparently submitted, but in her purpose of making every sacrifice for the sake of finding traces of her vanished parent her firm soul wavered not for an instant.

For the proceeds of a string of pearls that she possessed her faithful Hiram had undertaken a long journey, and moreover sent a series of messengers to different lands. Now at least one might have returned right well with new tidings, and she must speak with the freedman.

But how get to him unnoticed?

For some minutes she spied and listened for a favorable chance to cross the court.

There fell a ray of light upon a face. It was that of Hiram.

Now the merry semi-circle burst into a loud laugh as with one voice, and she seized a sudden determination, drew the mantle lower down over her face, quickly crossed over the

* Legal adviser.

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shaded part of the court, and then stooping forward, hurried through the moonshine to the slave quarters.

At the entrance to these she paused breathless and with beating heart. Had they observed her? No! Not a call rang out, not a step approached, all the dogs knew her; the sentinels who were usually stationed here had deserted their posts and sat by the fire with their comrades.

The long house to her left was where the weaving was done, and in its upper story dwelt Perpetua, her nurse.

Here, too, precaution was needed, for her aunt often came to this very place to apportion tasks to the work-women, to inspect what was done, and decide how the hundred looms were to be employed that were in motion daily from early in the morning until late at night. If she were seen here the weavers could too easily betray her nocturnal visit to their mistress.

They had not gone to rest here either, for from the great shed, open on all sides, only covered by a roof, where stood the dyer's vats, again her ears were greeted by loud laughter. This class of servants too enjoyed the coolness of the night after the glowing day; the girls had also kindled a fire.

Paula had to go past them through the moonshine, but the moment had not come for this, and she drew close up against the straw tent which covered the huge earthenware water-jugs that were stationed here for the maid-servants to drink from. It cast a dark, three-cornered shadow upon the dusty ground gleaming in the moonlight, and thus shielded her from the observation of the weavers; but she heard and saw what passed in the shed.

There lay behind her a day of sore trials that had ended for her with shrill discordance, and behind that a series of blissful hours promising happiness new to her. These had been preceded by a long period of humiliation as the sequence to crushing affliction.

How joyous and sunny had been her childhood, how delightful her first youth! There had been years of her life when she had awakened every morning to new joy and gone to bed every evening with thanksgivings that gushed forth from her soul as spontaneously as perfume from the rose. How often then had she incredulously shaken her lovely head in dissent when life had been called in her presence a vale of tears and human destiny pitiable. Now—now she knew better, and in many lonely hours during sleepless nights she asked herself whether there could be a good God tenderly affectionate to every being whom He had created, who would let a child be born and grow

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up with high hopes, just to let her be robbed of everything that was dear and desirable to her, down to hope itself.

But the unhappy girl had been piously educated, so prayed on and clung to faith; and just recently it had seemed as though Heaven was going to grant her what her warm heart most longed after, viz., the love of a man worthy of being loved. And now—and now?

There she stood disconsolate, feeling intensely her heart's emptiness, and if she had been miserable before, now she was still more so; then she had been lonely, now she had been betrayed, she, the daughter of Thomas, the relation, the guest of the richest family in the country; and beside her, in the rudely built, stained dyer's-shed, from the chests of slave-girls bruised by the overseer's lash, rang forth such loud merry peals of laughter that she had to listen and fix her eyes upon those endued with such exuberant spirits.

Under the great shed covered with palm branches were gathered together many girls, pretty and ugly, brown and white, little and big, straight and crooked, from stooping incessantly over the loom at a tender age, for all were young, none older than eighteen. Slaves were capital, bearing interest in work and children. Each bond-maiden was married to another slave soon after attaining her growth. In weaving, both maids and matrons were employed, but the latter slept in their own quarters with husband and children. The unmarried work-women, on the other hand, passed the night in sleeping-rooms adjoining the place where their work went on.

Now they enjoyed the evening holiday and had divided into two groups. One of these watched an Egyptian girl scribbling upon a table, the other sat amusing themselves with a harmless game. This consisted in every girl flinging her shoe away over her head. If it flew over a mark set behind the thrower's back then she was soon to be married to the man she loved, but if it fell between her and the limit set, without reaching it, then she had either to live single longer, or was to put up with a mate whom she did not like.

The girl who was drawing, with about twenty grouped around her, had to design patterns for the weaver, possessing the talent derived from her ancestors for representing any face by giving a side view of it with a few strokes, so that it was easily recognizable, no matter how comically distorted it might be. This art work she did with the help of a wax tablet and a copper stylus, and then it was for the others to guess for whom it was intended. A solitary girl cowered against that

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post of the shed which was furthest in the rear and looked moodily into her lap.

Paula surveyed all this, and comprehended, too, what was going on, although no connected sentence was spoken, and nothing was to be heard but laughter—loud, hearty, irresistible laughter. If a maid threw her shoe far enough then her young companions laughed and shouted at the top of their voices, and each one called out lustily the name of the man that she chose for her fellow servant; if the shoe fell to the ground in front of the stake, the merriment was still more boisterous, and they yelled out the name of the oldest and most repulsive slave of whom they could think. A brown Syrian had not succeeded in reaching the mark, but she boldly snatched at the chalk and drew a new line between herself and the shoe, so that now this came to lie behind one mark, and now the merriment reached its climax, for many rushed up to the false line to rub it out. A strapping, curly headed Nubian threw the shoe into the air and picked it up again, while others could not recover from their amusement at so good a jest, and called out the name of him for whose sake her companion had so rashly interfered with the turning of fortune's wheel.

It was as though some merry kobold had taken up his quarters in the drafty shed, for the carryings-on around the limner of portraits were no less lively than among the other set. If a face were recognized then all rejoiced, if not, then the maids called out the names of various persons whom it might represent. What tremendous applause rewarded the well-executed caricature of the severest of the overseers! She who saw it held her sides for laughing; and how mad was the frolic when a girl snatched the tablet from the designer and others fell over her in the effort to wrest it from her!

In the beginning Paula had looked at all this coldly, shaking her head. How could anybody enjoy such nonsense and find such keen pleasure in such trifling things! Indeed, even when she was small she could never laugh over nothing, and those grown-up girls, in their ignorance and the narrowness of their minds, were they not, as it were, altogether children?

The walls of the governor's mansion comprised their world; just like little ones, they did not look beyond the present, and so they too could laugh the same way. "Fate," thought Paula, "is now making up to them for the misfortune of their birth and a thousand toilsome days, and after that they are tired and go to bed cheerfully. I could envy those poor creatures! If it were possible I would mix with them and become a child once more!"

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Meanwhile the comic sketch of the overseer had been completed, and a dumpy little fat girl broke forth into a hearty, long-sustained fit of laughter that came so naturally from her full chest that Paula, who, verily, had not come hither to laugh, suddenly caught the infection, and, willy-nilly, had to laugh with her. Grief and misery were forgotten, and for her there were no more weighing and speculating, and for some minutes she felt nothing, but that she was laughing heartily and continuously like a young, healthy creature as she was. Ah! how good it was to forget herself for once! She did not say this to herself, but she felt it, and laughed still harder, as the slave-girl who had been sitting alone there by the post joined the others and called out something to the frolicsome crowd that, incomprehensibly to Paula, excited their risibilities anew.

The slender form of the silent girl now stood by the fire. Paula had never seen her before, and nevertheless she was by far the handsomest one of all, but did not look cheerful, and probably was suffering pain, for a cloth was wrapped around her head, and, passing over her fair hair, was tied on top of her head as if she had tooth-ache.

The sight of her brought Paula to herself, and no sooner did she begin to think again than there was an end put to jollity; but the slave-girls continued to give themselves up to it; meanwhile their laughing this time did not sound so pure and harmless as awhile ago their fun-making had taken a direction that they would have done well to avoid.

The girl with the bandaged head was also a domestic of the household, but had not been admitted among the weavers until very lately and after she had been a seamstress for a long while under the charge of two old slave-widows. When an infant at her mother's breast she had been brought from Persia to Alexandria by Heraclius's soldiers, after the victory over Chosroes II., and there the two had been bought for the Mukaukas.

The Persian woman died, but in unwonted servitude, her infant, now about thirteen years old, had become a lovely girl with a skin swan-like in its whiteness and luxuriant golden tresses that even now glittered wondrously in the fire-light. Young Orion had set eyes upon her before his journey, and inflamed by the beauty of the young Persian, desired to possess her. Unprincipled servants and officers had speedily aided him in having her moved to a country house belonging to the Mukaukas, on the other side of the Nile, and there he had been able to visit her as often as he felt inclined. Inexperienced, unprotected, and with no friend to warn her, as was her case,

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the young slave, who was barely sixteen years old, had not ventured to resist her master's handsome son, nor indeed could she. When the fickle Orion (who was already tired of the girl that could offer him nothing but her beauty) had set off for Constantinople, the Lady Nephoris learned what she had been to her son, and ordered the chief overseer to hinder the unhappy creature from ever again "practicing her seductive arts." He considered that he had obeyed this instruction when, in conformity with an old custom, he had had her ears cut off. After this cruel punishment the mutilated beauty fell into a profound melancholy, and although the exorcists of the Church and other necromancers tried in vain to rebuke the demon of lunacy, she remained what she had been, a well-disposed, friendly creature, showing herself quiet and diligent with her wardens, and now also in the working-room during the hours for labor. Her madness only cropped out when she was idle, and the other weavers made it the occasion of having some diversion.

Now they had drawn Mandana away from the fire, and with mock reverence invited her to sit down upon her throne, an empty color-cask, for she lived in the singular delusion of being the Mukaukas George's wife.

Laughingly each one offered her homage, humbly asked some favor of her, or inquired after the health of her husband or condition of her estate. A proper feeling had long restrained these poor, ignorant creatures from mentioning Orion's name, but finally a scrawny, ill-favored negress with woolly hair stepped up and asked her with a horrid grimace:

"Oh, mistress, what about your little son, Orion?"

The crazy creature was not at all discomposed by this question, but gravely replied: "I have married him to the emperor's daughter at Constantinople."

"Ah, that indeed!" cried the black girl. "A fine match! Do you know though that the young gentleman is here again? Then he will certainly introduce his high wife to you, and we'll get to see purple and crowns!"

At these words the blood mounted into the cheeks of the lunatic. With a look of anguish she pressed her hands upon the bandage over her mutilated ears and asked, "Really and truly? Is he back?"

"Not for a long time yet," said soothingly another better-disposed slave.

"Do not believe her!" cried the black girl. "And if you want to learn the latest news, last evening he took the tall Damascus lady out boating on the Nile. My brother, the boat-

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man, was one of the oarsmen, and he spoke the young lady fair, I can tell you, fair—"

"My husband, the great Mukaukas?" asked Mandana, trying to collect her thoughts.

"No, your little son, Orion, who has the emperor's daughter for a wife," laughed her tormentor.

Hereupon the lunatic looked around with unsteady glances, and once more asked in perplexity, as though she had not perfectly understood: "Orion? That handsome Orion?"

"Your dear little son Orion!" once more exclaimed the other one, shouting as though she had to do with a deaf person. Then the usually amiable girl clutched at the place where her ears should have been with one hand, but with the other slapped her tormentor so hard upon her thick negro lips that the sound rang forth; and then she clearly roused herself by shrieking, and yelled out:

"My son, did you say, my son Orion! As if you did not know! It was my lover that he was; yes, he told me that he was, and that was why they came and bound me and cut off my ears. But I—I don't care for him. I could, I should like to—" So saying, she doubled up her fists, gnashed her white teeth, and continued, with rattling breath: "Where is he? You would not tell me? Only wait, wait! Oh, I'm cute, and I know already! You have him here. Where, then? Orion, Orion, where are you?"

With that she jumped up, ran through the shed, pushed back the cover of every dye-vat amid peals of laughter, bending low and looking down into it as if she might find him there.

Most of the girls tittered at this silly proceeding, but others were moved to pity, and having been distressed before by the pitiable shrieks of the poor creature, they now withdrew to collect together in a group, and had already proposed a new game when a neatly dressed little woman entered the shed clapping her plump hands and calling out:

"Enough of laughter! To bed now, you busy bees. Early in the morning night is past, and after sun-up our looms will be clattering again! One here, another there, exactly like the little mouse when the cat catches him! Be quick, you nightbirds! Will you make haste?"

The girls had learned obedience, and while they hurried past their superintendent on their way to the sleeping-rooms, Perpetua, a woman but little over fifty, in whose countenance good sense and benevolence were happily blended, pricked up her ears and listened out into the night; for from the water-

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tent she had caught the sound of a peculiar, long-drawn, but still subdued whistle, and this signal was well known to her, for the prefect Thomas had called together with it the members of his household scattered in the garden. Now Paula made use of it to make her nurse aware of her being close at hand.

The good woman shook her head ominously. What drove her dear child to her at so late an hour? Something portentous must have happened; and quick-witted as she was, she exclaimed, in order to let Paula know that she recognized her signal:

"Be quick, now! Hurry up! Whew, girls, whew! Bestir yourselves, I say!"

Then she followed the last bond-maid into the sleeping-room, and when she had convinced herself that none were missing save the deranged girl, she asked after her. All had seen her just before in the shed, and so she bade the girls good-night and left them, producing the impression that she was going to look for the one left behind.

CHAPTER VII.

PAULA CONFIDES IN HER NURSE.

PAULA entered the chamber of her nurse, who, after a cursory search for the imbecile proved fruitless, had left her to her fate, not, however, without slight scruples of conscience.

In Perpetua's room an excellently trimmed copper lamp hung from the ceiling; and this little retreat and its occupant corresponded perfectly to one another, for both were plain and pretty, neat and tidy, simple and yet pleasant to look upon. Around the nurse's bedstead snow-white transparent curtains protected against mosquitoes, above the head of the bed hung a crucifix of exquisite workmanship, and the seats were covered with good stuffs of varied color—the refuse of the loom. Prettily woven straw mats covered the floor, and upon the window-sills, as also in a corner of the room where a clay image of the Good Shepherd looked down upon the praying-desk, stood pots of flowers that filled the modest apartment with perfume.

Hardly had the door closed before Perpetua exclaimed:

"But, child, how you have frightened me! At so late an hour!"

"I had to come," protested Paula. "I could not stand it any longer!"

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"Tears!" sighed the nurse; and her bright little eyes began to glisten with moisture. "Poor soul, what has troubled you again?"

So saying, she drew near to the young lady to stroke her hair, but the latter flung herself on her bosom, passionately clasping her neck with both arms, and sobbing violently.

The little matron let her have her way for awhile, then extricated herself from her embrace, dried her own tears and those of her great darling, which had fallen upon her smooth, gray hair, held Paula's chin with a firm hand, while she turned her face toward her own, saying, sympathetically and decidedly:

"There, now, that is enough! For me you might weep on; because it lightens one's heart; but it is so late! Is it the same old song again—home-sickness, vexation, and the like, or have you met with some new grievance?"

"Alas!" continued the girl, continuing to sob while she clutched convulsively at the handkerchief she had in her hand, "I have reached the utmost verge of endurance, and can stand it over yonder no longer. I'll not bear it! I am not made of stone; and if of an evening one dreads the night, and of a morning the day that must be so horrid, so unendurable—"

"Then one listens to reason, sweet mistress, and says to one's self that it is wise of two evils to choose the lesser one; and what I have had to represent to you so often before I must get you to listen to once more. If we resign our safe place of refuge here and actually venture forth into the wide world, what can we find there more favorable?"

"May be only a hut with a spring beneath two palm-trees! That will satisfy me if I can only keep you and be freed from the rest!"

"What is that? What does it mean?" murmured the nurse, shaking her head ominously. "Day before yesterday you seemed quite content; there must be some new—"

"Yes, there must; there has something happened," broke in the girl, almost beside herself. "My uncle's son—you were a witness of his arrival here—and I thought, I believed too that he was worthy of such a reception— I, Betta, I— Pity me, I— You do not know what power this man exerts over hearts. And I—I believed his glances, his words, his singing, and—yes, it must, it must all be told, also his kiss upon this hand! I—I— But all this was false, was deceitfulness, was making horrible sport of a weak, silly heart; or worse, more infuriating still! In short—while he was doing all that in him lay to beguile me—the very slaves in the boat observed it—he was fully set upon courting that little doll—you know her—

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little Catharine. I have it upon the authority of Aunt Nephoris, who, however, told me on purpose to mortify me. She is betrothed to him; and at the same time the wretch dares to flirt with me, has the face—"

Here Paula again wept aloud; but this time the old woman herself was nonplussed, knowing not what advice to give, and only muttered to herself:

"Bad, bad— This added to the rest— Dear me, dear me!" But soon she composed herself and said, determinedly: "This is indeed a new and unlooked-for misfortune; but we have borne heavier of a wholly, wholly different sort! So, hold your head up, and whatever tenderness still lingers in your heart toward the traitor pluck it out and trample it down! Your pride will come to your aid; and since you know now what this Mr. Orion is, then thank God that it has come no further between you!" And now she told her everything that she had learned about the poor imbecile Mandana and Orion's crime against her, and added, when Paula expressed her lively indignation: "Yes, child, a breaker of hearts, a ruthless destroyer of happiness he is; and probably it was my duty to have warned you against him; but because he is not so bad otherwise—for instance, he saved from drowning, at the risk of his own life, Hathor, brother of the designer, whom you well know —and because I thought that you would at least have to preserve friendly relations with him upon his return home, I omitted to do so. And then, old fool that I was, I deemed your proud heart panoplied, but I see now that it is only a weak heart like that of any other girl; and now, for the first time, in your twenty-first year, you have bestowed your affections upon a man—"

Here Paula interrupted her:

"I love that traitor no more; no, I hate him—loathe him! And all the others too—all are against me!"

"Alas, that it must be so!" sighed her nurse. "Hard indeed is your fate. He, Orion, is no longer in question; but I often ask myself if it might not be better with the others. If you had not made it so hard for them, my child, they must have loved you, they could not have helped it; but ever since you have been in the house you have felt wretched, and desired to be let alone; and they have gratified your wish, and now you find it hard to bear the result of your own action. It is just so, child; you must not contradict me! And let us be just for this once: whoever does find love that gives away none and holds aloof from the rest of the world? Yes, could we only make the people that we associate with to suit ourselves!

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Life prescribes that we take them as they are, yet this saying has no force with you, my love, none whatever!"

"I am what I am!"

"To be sure; and you are the best of the good; but who over yonder suspects this? Everybody represents something. And you? What wonder if in you they see only 'misfortune.' A thousand pities that it is so. But who likes to be met continually by a clouded brow?"

"I have not, by a word even, imposed my griefs upon any one of them!" exclaimed Paula, drawing herself up proudly erect.

"That is just it," answered her nurse. "They gave you a home and thus thought to earn a right to share your griefs as well as protect your person. Perhaps, too, they wanted to comfort you; for in this, child, believe me, in this lies a secret pleasure. He who shows compassion always feels that the testifying it does him more good than its recipient. I know life! Have you never asked yourself whether you were not robbing your friends over there of a pleasure?—yes, perhaps injuring them by your reserve? You treasure grief more than aught else, as they plainly see from afar off; but whence your suffering comes you studiously conceal. Every good person would like to heal a wound exposed to his view, but your whole manner says to them: 'Stay where you are and let me alone!' To your uncle, at least, you used to be affectionate!"

"And so I am still; and I have a hundred times felt the impulse to confide all to him; meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile?"

"Only consider, Betty, how he lies there, cold as marble, stiff and unsympathetic, half dead and half alive. In the beginning confidential words often trembled upon my lips—"

"And now?"

"Now all that evil has retreated so far into the background! I believe I have trifled away the right to complain to him of what oppresses."

"Ahem!" sighed Perpetua, who had no answer to make to this. "Well, my dear, only keep up a good heart! Orion has already been made to feel that with us there is a limit beyond which one may not go. You can hold that little head high enough and exercise judgment coolly enough, too! Bear patiently what is not to be altered; and if my inner consciousness deceives me not then will he whom we seek—"

"On that very account am I come. Are none of the messengers back yet?"

"Yes, the little Nabbathæan," answered the nurse, with

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some hesitation, "and he has brought— But, for Heaven's sake, child, do not build up any false hope! Soon after sundown Hiram was here—"

"Betty!" shrieked the young girl, clutching at her nurse's arm, "what did he learn? What news has he brought?"

"None, none! How you do butt your head against a stone wall! What he learned amounts to nothing. I could only talk with Hiram a few minutes. Early to-morrow morning he will bring the man himself to see me. The only thing that he did say to me—"

"By the wounds of Christ, what was it?"

"He said that the messenger had heard of an elderly hermit who had once been a great warrior."

"Father, father!" cried Paula. "Hiram is sitting by the fire with the other men. Fetch him here, quick, quick! I command you, Perpetua; do you hear? Oh, dearest, best Betty, come with me; let's look him up!"

"Patience, sweet mistress, patience!" implored the nurse. "Alas, alas! you poor darling, it will come to nothing again; and if we once more follow a wrong clew there will be fresh disappointment."

"Never mind; you come with me."

"To the men-servants by the fire at this hour? That might do for me! But meanwhile wait here, Miss Paula. Ah, no, I know what we can do. I'll wake Joseph—Hiram's boy. He is sleeping over yonder by his horses, and he'll call his father. Ah, such impatience, such a stormy, passionate little heart! If I do not carry out your wishes you'll not sleep a wink this night, and to-morrow will wander about like somebody in a trance. Rest, only rest. I'm going already."

So saying, the old woman had flung a kerchief over her head and hurried into the open air; but Paula fell upon her knees before the crucifix over the bed and prayed with all fervor until the nurse's return. Soon afterward a man's steps were heard on the stairs, and Hiram entered.

He was a powerful-looking fellow, fifty years old, with two honest blue eyes lighting up a plain, common-looking face. Any one observing his broad chest would have expected to issue from it, when he spoke, a deep bass voice; but Hiram had been a stammerer from childhood; and in his perpetual association with horses he had accustomed himself to the use of strange, incoherent sounds that he ejaculated in a high falsetto voice. He never spoke unless under compulsion.

When he found himself in the presence of the daughter of his master and benefactor he prostrated himself before her, looked

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up at her humbly yet affectionately, with the eyes of a faithful dog, and kissed first the hem of her robe then the hand with which she was endeavoring to lift him up.

Paula graciously but decidedly cut short his protestations of joy at seeing her again, with difficulty stammered forth as they were, and when he finally began to speak his discourse flowed much too slowly for her impatience.

The Nabbathæan who had brought the intelligence which was thus kindling new hope, he informed her, was not disinclined to pursue the trail found further; but could only wait until the next morning, and rated his services high.

"He is to have all, all that he asks," interposed Paula. But Hiram implored her not to hope for too great a thing by his looks and unintelligible exclamations more than by words.

The Nabbathæan, Dusare—so he wound up his communication to the nurse—had heard of a hermit at Raitha on the Red Sea, formerly a great warrior of Greek origin, who for the last two years, in all silence, had been leading a life of penitence among the pious brothers at the sacred Mount of Sinai. The messenger had not thought to ask after the name he had borne in the world; but among the anchorites he was called Paulus.

"Paulus!" exclaimed the girl, with flying breath. "A name that reminds him of my mother and me too—even me! And then he, the hero of Damascus, was known to the world as Thomas—and now in all likelihood he believes that I too met death there, hence devotes himself to the service of God and of Christ, calling himself Paulus like Saul, that other man of Damascus, after he had found salvation. Oh, Betty! oh, Hiram! don't you see that it is he; it must be he; can you doubt it any longer?"

The Syrian thoughtfully shook his head and uttered a long-drawn "whist;" but Perpetua clasped her hands together and exclaimed, mournfully:

"Did I not think so? The fire that the shepherds kindle by night to warm their hands by she takes for the rising sun, and the rattling of chariot-wheels for the thunder of the Most High! How many thousands are named Paul? Do compose yourself, child, and give over trying to weave for yourself a festal robe out of airy mist! Expect the worst, then you will be armed against mishaps, and reserve to yourself the right to hope! Tell her, Hiram, do tell her what further the messenger reports; there is nothing fixed; everything is fluctuating as yet like dust driven before the wind."

Then the freedman went on to say that this Nabbathæan was a reliable man, far cleverer than himself as an envoy; for be-

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sides his own language he understood Egyptian, Greek, and Aramaic, and yet it had been impossible for him at Tor, where the monks of the Convent of the Transfiguration at Sinai had a settlement, to obtain any more exact information about the anchorite, Paul. To be sure, afterward, on his voyage to Colcium, he had learned from monks that there was a second Sinai. The monastery in the oasis at the foot of that jagged, sky-piercing mountain had been closed on account of heresy among the monks, but in the defiles of this tremendous height, however, there dwelt still many recluses in a small monastery in *lauras** and solitary cells hewn out of the rock, and probably that Paul spoken of might be there. This was a good clew; both she and Hiram had determined beforehand to follow it up, but the quondam warrior, for all that, was likely a stranger; and it had seemed cruel to them both to expose her to so painful an illusion.

Hereupon Paula interposed, exclaiming in glad excitement:

"And why should not something else than disillusion be my portion once again? How can you have the heart to take away from me that hope which is the sole nourishment of this poor heart? But I will not let you rob me of it! Your Paul at Sinai is the lost one. I have a presentiment of it. I feel that he is. Were those last pearls not sold already then the Nabbathæan must— But as it is— When can you set off, good Hiram?"

"Not in le—ss than fourteen days in a—a—ny e—vent. I —I am in the—the stadtholder's service, and day a—after to —to-morrow will be the—e great horse-fair at Ni—i—korust. A new sta—allion is to be bought for the young gen—gentleman, and our foals—"

"I'll beg my uncle to let you off to-morrow," cried Paula. "Yes, I'll throw myself at his feet."

"He will not do it!" interposed the nurse. "The steward, Sebek, told him all about it in my name before the time for audience came, and tried his best to get leave of absence from Hiram."

"And the answer?"

"Lady Nephoris called the tidings a new will-o'-the-wisp, and my lord agreed with her. Afterward your uncle forbade Sebek to betray the matter to you, and sent me word that after the horse-fair he would, perhaps, send Hiram to Sinai. So, patience, sweet mistress! What are fourteen days, at longest three weeks, and then—"

* A series of hermitages attached to one another and yet distinct.

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"But I'll die meanwhile!" cried Paula. "The Nabbathæan, you say, is here, and ready to go?"

"Yes, mistress!"

"Then we engage him," said Paula, positively; but the nurse, who must already have spoken right confidentially with her countryman, sorrowfully shook her head and answered:

"He is too dear for us!" Then she explained that this accomplished linguist had already been solicited to guide a caravan to Ctesiphon. This would furnish him support for a whole year; but nevertheless he was quite willing to break off negotiations with the merchant, Hanno, and to search Arabia Petræa through for her, if he could be paid two thousand drachmas.

"Two thousand drachmas!" repeated Paula, looking down in confusion and distress. Soon, however, she drew herself up proudly and cried, indignantly, "How durst they withhold from me what is my own? If my uncle denies me what I demand of right and necessity, then recourse must be had to what I would gladly avoid, and what will grieve me enough for his sake. I'll e'en transfer my cause to the judges."

"To the judges?" smiled her nurse. "You can not enter a plea without a *kyrios*, and your uncle is yours. And then, ere they pronounce judgment the envoy will be back from far-off Ctesiphon!"

And now her nurse once more tried to persuade her to wait quietly until the horse-fair should be over. But broken-heartedly she kept her eyes fixed upon the ground; but Perpetua started, and so did Hiram, for all of a sudden she broke forth into a loud cry of exultation:

"God be thanked; I have what we need!"

"How, child? What?" asked her nurse, with her hand upon her heart. Paula, however, deigned no information, but turned briskly to the Syrian:

"Is the first court free again? Have the people separated?"

He answered in the affirmative. The freedmen had dispersed when Hiram left. The gentlemen did not separate for a long while afterward, yet one could easily get past them.

"Well, then," directed the girl, "you, Hiram, go ahead of me and wait for me at the servants' gate. In my room I'll give you something that will cover ten times the Nabbathæan's claim. Do not look at me in that troubled way, Betty. He gets the large emerald out of my mother's necklace."

Hereupon the nurse clasped her hands, exclaiming mournfully, in a warning tone:

"Child, child, that glorious set, that family heirloom, that stone inherited from the Emperor Theodosius, to sell it, no,

throw it away, not to save your father, but— Yes, child, it is so— But only because you lack patience to wait quietly two petty weeks!"

"That was harsh, that was unjust, Betty," broke in the girl, reproachfully. "A month is in question; and how much depends upon the messenger we all know. Have you forgotten how Hiram extolled this particular man's address? And then must I, the younger, remind you of another thing? What is human existence? A moment decides as to life or death, and father is an old man, who, even before the siege, was covered with so many wounds. The thing at stake may be to see him again or to see him nevermore—"

"Yes, yes," murmured the old woman, "perhaps you are right; and if I—" But Paula stopped her mouth with a kiss, and then directed the Syrian to come to her apartment for the stone and to sell it as soon as possible the next day to the Jew Gamaliel, a rich and upright man; but not, though, for less than twelve thousand drachmas. If the goldsmith could not pay so much all at once, then he might content himself for the present with the two thousand drachmas demanded as the envoy's recompense and collect the rest for her later.

The Syrian went ahead of her; and when, after a long leave-taking, she left her nurse's friendly little chamber, Hiram had already carried out the first part of her instructions, and awaited her at the servants' gate.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STOLEN GEM.

As Hiram supposed, the members of the household who held the higher positions were still sitting in company with their friends, and there were added to them the guide of the caravan, and the chief followers of the merchant Haschim; Hassan the Masdakite, as also his secretary and dragoman.

Those here assembled were all Christians with the exception of the Jewish goldsmith Gamaliel and the attendants of the Arab; and they had only reluctantly taken the Moslems into their circle—the Jew having been for years a welcome member of their set. However, this had to be done, and with promptness too, since the master had ordered them to be hospitably entertained, and from one who had traveled so far they had a right to expect much novel information. In this, to be sure, they had found themselves disappointed, for the dragoman was

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a taciturn man, and the Masdakite knew nothing at all of the Egyptian language and very little of the Greek.

After trying several times in vain to draw them into conversation they paid no further attention to them, and allowed Orion's secretary to do the talking. Already the day before he had told much about the imperial court that was new and fascinating; but this evening he entered more into particulars concerning his young master's brilliant career in Constantinople, whither he had attended him. He depicted the three victories that he had won in the circus with his own horses, and described, in a lively manner, how, in an insurrection of the populace, with only five friends and in advance of them all, he had cut his way through hundreds of the insurgents from the palace to the church of St. Sophia, and then he went on to boast of Orion's successes among the beauties of the capital.

"The queen of all," exclaimed he, ostentatiously, "was Heliodora, no flute-player or anything of that sort; no, a rich, high-born, virtuous patrician lady, the widow of the Flavianus, the nephew of Justinus, a senator and cousin to the emperor. All Constantinople was at her feet; even the great Gratian sought to win her affections, but, of course, in vain. A palace such as hers is not to be found in all Egypt, let alone Alexandria. The governor's mansion—for its reputation is not based upon size—is as a peasant's hut, a miserable barn in comparison with it. Some other time I'll describe to you this jewel casket. In front of its portal, night and day, stood slaves and freedmen who had flowers and fruits, rare gifts and tender sonnets on perfumed silk tinted with rose-color, to present to her, but her favor was not to be purchased until she became acquainted with Orion. Would you believe it, she fell in love with him the very first time that she met him at Justinus's villa, and was as much his own as this ring here on my finger is mine!"

So saying, the vain man displayed to his audience the golden hoop set with a right valuable gem, which he owed to the generosity of his master, and continued, eagerly:

"And henceforth the names of Orion and Heliodora were upon every lip; and how often have I seen people go into raptures over the beauty of this magnificent pair. At the circus, the theater, sailing on the Bosphorus, everywhere, they were to be seen together, and, in the dreadful days of that bloody revolution which saw the throne overturned more than once, they lived together, as it were, in Paradise. Often he drove her out in his chariot, often she him in hers."

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"Such a woman kept horses too?" asked the superintendent of stables, contemptuously.

"Woman!" cried the secretary. "A high-born lady! She keeps bright bays, great animals of Armenian breed, and nimble little ponies from the island of Sardinia, that, four abreast, whirled her chariot over the ground as fast as hunted foxes. Her horses always wore flowers and fluttering ribbons on their golden harness, and her charioteer knew how to drive them too! Everybody thought that our master and the fair widow would make a match; and that nothing came of it almost put an end to that poor Heliodora; she looks like a saint, and is as soft as a kitten; for I was present at their leave-taking, and it was a pity to see the tears she shed. But she could not get angry with her idol, not she, the soft-hearted, kittenish thing! She even gave him as a memento of herself her little dog, that silky Spitz which you have seen. And my word for it, that was a true love-token: for she was as much devoted to the little beast as if it had been a live child. He felt the parting, too; it cut him to the quick; but I am his private secretary, and it would not do for me 'to tell tales out of school.' When he said 'farewell' he pressed the little dog to his heart, and in so doing promised her to send her some memento in return, to signify how precious to him had been her love, and that this will be no mean little trifle any one would be willing to take his oath who knows my master. You, Gamaliel, perhaps he has already had recourse to you?"

The person thus addressed, the same to whom Hiram was to offer Paula's emerald in sale, was a rich Alexandrian of cheerful disposition, who so soon as the invasion of Alexandria by the Saracens had made residence for him there unsafe had fled from that port with the most of his compatriots and taken refuge in Memphis, because he could calculate there upon the protection of his powerful advocate, the Mukaukas George. Now he shook his gray head in dissent, and somewhat later whispered into the secretary's ear:

"We have what he wants! If you bring me the cow you'll get the calf, and indeed one with twelve legs. Satisfied, eh?"

"Twelve per cent. of the profit? Done then!" answered the secretary just as softly, with a sly and knowing smile, and when afterward a revenue officer asked why Orion had not brought home to his parents as their daughter-in-law that beautiful sweetheart, the bearer also of a noble name, he answered that she was a Greek, and of course belonged to the Melchite sect. No further reason was needed by those present; yet now since the subject of confessions had come up, there

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was evolved as usual from such evening talks a dispute about dogmatic questions, and during this a government officer ventured to remark that if a son of the Mukaukas was not concerned here—concerning whom no suggestion of the sort could be entertained—but only a plain Jacobite citizen and his Melchite sweetheart, perhaps a compromise might be effected. Both need only make up their minds—for his part he would be thankful for an expedient of the kind—to accept the Monotheletic doctrine for which the imperial court and, moreover, the deceased patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria had been warm advocates, and which was founded upon the opinion that there were two natures in Christ over which one common will held control. This faith, it is true, renders composite the nature of our Saviour, but preserves, in a peculiarly restrictive sense, its unity, which is the main thing.

So heretical a proposition of course provoked the loudest expressions of disapproval from the Jacobites assembled here, who emphasized more and more sharply their differences of opinion, and speedily a peaceful interchange of views turned into a wild wrangling that threatened to end in deeds of violence.

In the very beginning of this controversy Paula had succeeded in crossing over the court-yard unperceived. Silently she beckoned then to Hiram to follow her, and he cautiously removed his sandals, thrust them under the steeply ascending stairs of the servants' steps, and a few moments later stood inside the young lady's apartment.

Without delay she opened her trunk, took out of it a superbly wrought necklace set with pearls and handed it to the Syrian, with the request that he would break from its socket a huge emerald that formed a pendant in its center.

The strong hands of the freedman, with the help of a knife, promptly and easily performed this work, and while he weighed the gem, that was larger than a walnut, and now lay in the palm of his hand naked and perfectly free from the half-open gold case, in which it had hung from the chain, it flashed and sparkled, Paula meanwhile repeating the instructions which she had previously given him in her nurse's presence.

As soon as the trusty man left his mistress she loosened the plaits of her long, beautiful hair, and as she did so smiled full of joyful hope; but she had not yet begun to undress herself when she heard a knock. Startled, she jumped up, hurried to the door, bolted it quickly, and asked, prepared for the worst: "Who is there?"

"Hiram," ran the softly whispered answer; and after she

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had again opened the door she learned that while he had been with her the servants' gate had been locked, and that he could find no exit from the spacious house, where his business seldom carried him.

What was to be done now?

The Syrian durst not wait for the reopening of the gate, for he must set about the execution of his trust betimes in the morning; and if he should be caught and put in custody even for a half day the Nabbathæan would enter upon a different service.

Taking a sudden resolution she put up her hair, tied a kerchief around her head, and said:

"Come, then; the moon is still shining; to use a lamp would be dangerous. I'll lead the way, and you must keep behind me. If the kitchen is only empty then we can reach the *viridarium* unseen. If the officers are still assembled in the court-yard, then the grand entrance is open; for many of them stay in the house. In any event you must get through the front hall. From the *viridarium* out you can not miss your way. But stay! Before the *tablinum* usually lies big Beki, the savage dog of Hermonthis. He does not know you, for he never leaves the house, but he will follow me. If I hold up my hand keep somewhat in the background. He keeps perfectly quiet in the presence of his master's family, and a stranger even is safe with one of them by. Not a word is to be exchanged between us from this time on. If they discover me I'll tell them the truth; if they find you alone then you can say—let me see—just say that you are waiting to see Orrion in order to get speech with him the first thing in the morning on account of the horse-fair at Niku."

"Yes; a stal—stallion wa—s of—fered to me a—at no—on this very day."

"Right, right; you are to be staying in the front hall then on his account. Besides, dawn will break in a few hours; but now, on!"

Quickly and steadily Paula mounted the stairway. At the lowest step Hiram again took off his sandals, and, in order to lose no time, kept them in his hand while he continued to follow his mistress. Silently she proceeded through the deep gloom until she reached the kitchen. Here she turned around and murmured to the Syrian:

"If anybody is in here, I'll say I've come to fetch water; if nobody is there I'll cough, and you are to follow me. At all events, the door will be open, and you can hear what passes. If I must turn back then go briskly forward the same way that

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we have come. In this case I'll repair to my chamber. But you are to wait in front of it until day-break, when the servants' gate will be opened again. If they find you, commit the explanation to me. Step back again and squeeze yourself into that corner."

Immediately afterward, with gentle hand she opened the kitchen door, through the uncovered roof of which shone the light of the setting moon and many stars. It was perfectly empty; only a cat lay on the bench by the great hearth, and a few bats with inaudible flapping of wings flitted hither and thither in the spacious room. Under the spits expiring coals were still glowing amid the ashes, like the eyes of lurking beasts of prey.

Paula coughed slightly, and as soon as she heard Hiram's steps behind her she continued her walk with beating heart and in torturing suspense. In the first place she crossed over a few steps, then through a dark passage, where bats in their arrowy flight shot close past her head. Finally she succeeded in crossing through the wide, open dining-room above. This opened upon the *viridarium*, plastered on the side, and decorated in the center by plants and a fountain. It formed an open quadrangle, at the side of which rose one of the wings of the governor's palace. It was still and tranquilizing in this remote spot, overarched by the deep blue sky that was studded with millions of golden stars. The moon was now approaching the center of the sky-light crowning the roof of the building. The immense foliage plants in the middle of the *viridarium* cast wonderful, ghost-like shadows upon the dewy sod, the water of the fountain splashed more loudly than in the day with a soothing, monotonous sound, now and then interrupted by brief pauses of intermission. The marble of the columns shimmered like white snow, and light clouds of mist that began to ascend from the damp sod, moved by the warm night breeze, floated hither and thither like ghosts in long, floating, misty garments. Night-butterflies silently hovered in the neighborhood of the groups of plants fluttering to and fro, and the whole inviting-looking place was filled with the sweet perfume of the lotus flowers in the marble basin of the fountain, the blossoms of the luxuriant shrubbery and the succulent tropical plants by which it was encircled. At any other time it would have been a delight to pause and look around here, to breathe its calm atmosphere and yield to the quiet enchantment of the night; but Paula's soul was steeled against all these charms. The brooding stillness that encompassed her lent a threatening aspect to the quarrel raging in the yard,

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that found its way here in broken waves of sound, and with timid solicitude she said to herself that all was not as it should be; for in front of the *tablinum*, which was constantly guarded by the dog or an armed sentinel, her keen eye could detect neither beast nor man, and—no, she was not mistaken—the door cased in bronze stood open, and the moonlight glittered upon the polished metal of its half-open door.

Now she stood still, and behind her Hiram did the same. Both listened in such suspense that the veins in their foreheads were swollen; but from the *tablinum*, that was hardly thirty paces distant, were heard only insulated, not exactly distinguishable, faint sounds that were drowned by the wild tumult raging outside.

Long, long seconds followed, until finally the half-opened leaves of the door parted and a man stepped forth. Paula's heart stopped beating; yet not for an instant did her eye lose its power of vision, and just as she had become thoroughly and unerringly convinced that he who crossed the threshold of the *tablinum* was none other than Orion, the great shaggy dog of Hermonthis stepped past him, snuffed up the outer air, and then with fierce barkings rushed upon the two watchers. Trembling and with clinched teeth, but still completely mistress of herself, she let him draw near, called his name, "Beki," in a soft caressing tone, catching hold of his shaggy head in order to scratch his ears, which delighted him. He recognized her and stopped barking.

She herself and her attendant stood behind a column in deepest shadow. Orion did not perceive them, and the barking had overpowered Paula's fondling address. When the dog was silenced and stood by her wagging his tail, he whistled to him, and the vigilant, obedient creature hurried joyfully to meet his master; but he received him with the words, "Stupid old brute!" let him leap over his arm, drew him close to himself, and then sportively pushed him back. Hereupon he closed the door and moved off in the direction of the court-yard.

"In order to gain his own apartments he must come back," Paula informed her attendant, drawing a deep breath. "Wait we here. But not an instant is to be lost! Forward to the door of the *tablinum!* The dog knows me now from afar, and will not bark again soon."

Herewith both walked rapidly forward, and when they had arrived at the door that lay in dark shadow behind deep posts, Paula inquired of her attendant:

"Did you recognize the man who came out here?"

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"Mr. Orion," ran the answer. "He had just returned from the city when I went ahead of you."

"Is that so?" she asked, with apparent indifference, as, leaning against the cool metal in which the door was cased, she looked into the garden and said to herself that she might now retrace her steps. But opportunely she remembered the dog. In any event she would describe the plain way to the freedman that he was to strike into from here; but she did not get so far, for from the space which separated the *viridarium* from the vestibule issued the sound of a woman's voice first, then the deeper tones of a man; and hardly had a few words passed between the two before the furious barking of the dog drowned every other noise, and immediately afterward a shriek of agony rang from a woman's lips and fell upon the ears of the listeners, followed by the sound of some heavy object falling to the ground.

What had happened?

Something horrible; something monstrous it must have been; there was no possible doubt of it. And soon Paula's suspicion was confirmed; for, from the door of the hall where this horrible catastrophe had occurred, rushed Orion, and with him the dog bounding away over the sod of the *viridarium*, that had until now been nursed and guarded like a sanctuary, being situated in that wing of the house which faced the Nile, and where he, with the rest of the family, had his abode.

"Now!" exclaimed Paula, quickly, taking the lead of the Syrian.

Breathlessly she flew through the first hall room and over the threshold of the unguarded front hall, but had not as yet reached its center, when she uttered a scream, for right before her lay in the moonlight a motionless body stretched out at full length upon the hard marble pavement.

"Fly, Hiram, fly!" cried she to the freedman. "The door is on the latch—is open—I see it!"

So saying, she threw herself on the floor beside the lifeless body, lifted up the head, and looked into the beautiful, pallid countenance of the deranged Persian slave. She felt her own hand moistened by the blood which had already soaked through the unfortunate's full suit of fair hair, and a slight shudder passed over her frame, yet she shook from her horror and disgust, and noticing dark spots upon the girl's torn *peplum*, she pulled it off and beheld gaping wounds upon the poor thing's fair white breast inflicted by the cruel teeth of the savage dog. At this sight Paula was overcome with varied emotions of indignation, grief and pity. Him whom only yesterday she

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had regarded as the embodiment of all manly perfection—Orion—was he guilty of this crime? And he, of whose bold daring spirit she had heard so much, had he fled? had he left in the lurch the victim that he had twice brought to ruin? But there was something else to be done here than lament and groan, and ask herself how, in the same human soul there could be found space for so much that was wicked and disgraceful beside what was noble and fine.

"The thing to do here was to save, to procure help; for Mandana's full chest still rose and fell perceptibly beneath her trembling fingers.

The freedman's brave heart had detained him by her and the wounded girl; and now he threw on the ground the sandals which he had been carrying in his hand, lifted up the unconscious form, supporting it against one of the pillars that encircled the room. Not until he had received a fresh order from his mistress did he make haste into the open air.

Paula looked after him, and as soon as she had heard the heavy door of the *atrium* fall to, without heeding her own suspicious situation, she called aloud for help so shrilly and imperatively that the sound startled many in the house from their slumbers, and soon from here and there came hurrying in a slave, a maid, an officer, a cook, and a watchman.

First of all, and so soon that he must have heard her call, having already started, appeared Orion also. The light night-dress that he wore she said to herself was assumed to give the wretch the appearance of having just risen from his couch. And had he actually done so? Was this man with the flushed face, staring eyes, disheveled hair and hoarse voice the same favorite of fortune whose gay manner, assured deportment, sunny countenance and enchanting songs had taken captive her soul? How his hands trembled when he approached the wounded girl; how artificial and embarrassed his question as to what had happened here, and how shyly he looked at her as he asked to know what had brought her into the front hall at so late an hour!

She deigned him no reply; but as soon afterward his mother addressed to her the same inquiry in a sharp tone, she replied, quickly and positively—she whose lips had never before uttered an untruth—"I could not sleep. The barking of the dog and cry of pain drove me down."

"That is what I call having acute hearing!" replied Nephoris, incredulously shrugging her shoulders. "At all events, in similar cases hereafter you should be on hand a little less promptly. Since when have young ladies learned

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to rush alone to the rescue when they hear the cry of murder?"

"If you had only armed yourself, lovely daughter of a hero," added Orion; but he had no sooner spoken thus than he repented of it bitterly, for with what a glance did Paula smite him! It seemed intolerable to her to hear herself addressed by *him*, and now for the first time—teasingly, almost mockingly—to be reminded of her father in this way, and so she retorted with cutting sharpness:

"I leave the bearing of arms to soldiers and murderers!"

"Soldiers and murderers," repeated Orion, pretending not to understand her meaning, with a forced smile; but then he continued bitterly, feeling as if he must defend himself. "Verily that sounds as if it came from the mouth of a tender-hearted maiden! But I implore you to draw nearer and compose yourself. This cruel wound here on the shoulder of this poor miserable creature—touches me more nearly than yourself, you may believe—was inflicted by a four-footed murderer, whose weapons are natural ones. Yes, that is evidently so! Shaggy Beki keeps watch in front of the *tablinum*. How the poor creature got here I do not know; but at any rate he scented her and then fell upon her unawares."

"May be that does not explain all!" interposed Lady Nephoris, holding aloft a pair of man's sandals that lay on the floor near to the sufferer.

Now Orion turned pale, hurriedly took his mother's find out of her hand, and would have liked to hurl them outside through the open roof. How came they here? To whom did they belong? Who had been there that night? Before he entered the *tablinum* he had locked the door to the vestibule and gone back there again afterward in order to open it for the people. It was just after he had accomplished this that he was surprised by the deranged girl who must have been lurking there in the *atrium* when he first passed through, but probably only found courage just then to cross his path. While she had rushed up to him the dog had pulled her down before he could prevent it; yes, most assuredly he would have flown to the rescue and brought help to her if thereby his penetrating into the *tablinum* had not been betrayed. He had shown sufficient presence of mind by hurrying to his room, throwing on his night-dress, and then returning to the scene of horror. When Paula's shriek rang forth, he was already on his way to see after the wounded girl, and with what feelings?

So confused, so broken, so discontented with himself he had never felt before; and with Paula he had, for the first time,

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experienced the sensation of being unable to look a fellow creature in the face!

And now these sandals! Their owner must have accompanied the deranged girl; and if he had seen him go into the *tablinum* and should betray what he had done there how could he again enter his parents' presence? It had seemed to him like a good joke, and now it had turned into bitter earnest. But the discovery of his night's escapade must be prevented! Rather commit a new crime, the worst one too, than compromise his honor. To whom did those sandals belong? Impulsively he held them up and called out in a loud voice: "Do these soles belong to any of you people; the gate-keeper, may be?"

When all held their peace, and the porter answered his query in the negative, he stood still thoughtfully, and continued with defiant glance and hoarse voice:

"Then a surprised criminal has let them drop. The stamp of our household is on the leather; they have been made in our workshops, and they smell—test it yourself, Sebek—they still smell of the stable. Take them in your charge, man; early in the morning we'll see which of us left this suspicious memento in the vestibule. You were the first person on the spot, fair Paula? Did you see no man here?"

"Yes, I did," answered she, looking at him defiantly.

"And whither did he vanish?"

"He crossed the *viridarium* rapidly like a fugitive coward; to get forward faster he ran upon the poor greensward and disappeared over yonder in the dwelling-rooms."

At these words Orion grated his teeth, and there flamed up within him fierce hatred against this sphinx in woman's form, in whose hand seemed to lie the power to ruin him, and from whose eyes flashed aversion and the will to injure him. What had thus set her against him? How could anybody on earth dare to look at him so—so—him, the pet of great and small—yes, her look had expressed not only animosity but contempt. Who in all the world was justified in accusing him of anything that could have called forth such feeling? Never, never had he encountered such enmity, and least of all on the part of a girl. He would have liked to crush the haughty, cold-hearted, unjust creature who had humiliated him so shamefully after he had shown his fondness for her, who had forced him, the man of tested courage, to fear; and he must forcibly restrain himself lest he should forget that she was a woman. What did all this mean? What demon was playing his mischievous pranks here? What had so altered him in a half hour that his

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whole inner being was in revolt against himself, as it were, and that one should dare to confront him thus?

His mother remarked the frightful change in her darling's features that occurred so soon as Paula affirmed that she had seen a man take refuge in her dwelling-rooms, and she explained it after a fashion of her own, calling out in genuine alarm:

"In the Nile wing did you say? Did the wretch penetrate into the quarter where your father sleeps? God of mercy, if there should be another murder planned? Quick, begone, Sebek! Bring up your armed men! Search through the whole house from bottom to top! Perhaps you'll catch the villain—did he tread upon the grass—you must seize him; he is not to escape!"

The steward hurried off, but Paula called upon the chief gardener—who had just rushed in with palpitating heart—to compare the sandal with the foot-print of the fugitive which must still be found upon the wet sod. And while she said this her glance again sought the eyes of the young man.

Again Orion was extremely disconcerted, and as he walked off to the *viridarium*, remarked: "That is my affair." Yet he felt ashamed of himself, and was seized with a choking sensation. He seemed to himself like an entrapped thief, a deceiver, a wretch, and began to comprehend that, in sooth, he was no longer what he had been before he had made that fatal expedition into the *tablinum*.

Paula looked after him, heaving a deep sigh. Had he sunk so low as to falsify the proof found, and to declare that the broad sole of the hostler fitted the track of his own daintily shaped foot? She despised him, but she felt like praying that at least he might not be guilty of this baseness; and when he came back declaring, with embarrassment, that he was not certain of his position, that the sandal did not seem to fit exactly the tracks found, she breathed more freely, and again turned to the patient, with the physician, who had just appeared.

Before Nephoris followed her, she drew Orion to her side and asked him, solicitously, what ailed him; he was looking so pale and agitated; but he answered, hesitatingly: "The fate of that poor girl"—and so saying, he pointed to the poor bleeding sufferer—"touches me deeply."

"Your soft heart! You were so as a boy!" said his mother, consolingly.

She had seen his eyes moisten, and yet those tears were not for the Persian, but that mysterious something which he knew

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not how to designate himself, but which he felt conscious of having lost in this hour, and its loss grieved him inexpressibly.

But the conversation between mother and son was soon interrupted; for to-night's first misadventure had found its fellow.

The splendid form of Hassan, the trusty guide of the Persian caravan, was borne lifeless into the hall. A fanatical Jacobite, upon occasion of his having sportively joined in the religious controversy, fell upon him and inflicted a deep, probably deadly wound with a billet of wood. The physician immediately turned his attention upon him, and among the murmuring and whispering crowds of men who, whether out of curiosity or desire to show themselves helpful, had pressed into the spacious hall, many a one now flew hither and thither in order to carry out the surgeon's prescriptions.

As soon as he had inspected the Masdakite's wound, he exclaimed, gruffly:

"An Egyptian blow, for it came from behind. What would all this rabble have? Out with everybody who does not belong here! Litters are the first things wanted; but you, Lady Nephoris, appoint us two rooms, one for yon poor, dear soul, and another for that grand fellow, with whom all will soon be over now, unless a miracle happens."

"To the north of the *viridarium*," replied the mistress of the house, "there are two rooms at your disposal."

"They will not do at all!" exclaimed the physician. "I want rooms open and airy, such as have a river exposure."

"Besides these there are only those beautiful guest chambers in the part of the house where my husband's niece has her room. Sick members of the family have often lain there, but for such plain people—do you understand?"

"No, I am deaf," returned the surgeon.

"I know," smiled Nephoris, "but really and truly those rooms have just been newly furnished for distinguished guests."

"Hardly more distinguished than are these poor creatures with such deadly wounds as they bear," interposed Philippus. "They are nearer to God and heaven than you are, if you do not care to change places with them. Halloo, there, men! To the guest chambers with these patients!"

CHAPTER IX.

REPENTANCE COMES TOO LATE.

"It is not, can not be possible!" cried Orion, jumping up from his desk. What he had done struck him in the light of

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a misfortune rather than a crime; he hardly knew himself how it had all come to pass! Yes, there were demons, bad, spiteful demons, and they had forced him to this senseless deed.

Yesterday evening after the purchase of the tapestry, at his mother's solicitation, he had escorted the widow Susannah home. There he had met with the brother of her deceased husband, the rich Chrysippus, from Alexandria, a jolly old bachelor, and when the subject of the tapestry had come up, and mention had been made of the Mukaukas's purpose of dedicating to the Church that work of art, including all of its magnificent jewels, the old gentleman had clasped his hands in dismay, seconded Orion's disapproval, and exclaimed, with a laugh:

"How is that? you are the son, and certainly a share of that rain of precious stones must fall to your lot! Eh, Catharine? A little diamond and opal sets off well the earthly inheritance of the young if the old care for naught but the heavenly. Do not be a fool! The maw of the Church is full enough; and verily a little bit is your due!" As they talked, a good deal of fine wine had been drunk, and finally, for the sake of exercise in the cool night air the old gentleman had accompanied Orion home. A litter followed him in which he was to return, and the whole way he was persuading the young man to induce his father not to throw the whole treasure into the jaws of the Church, and at least to bestow upon him a few gems for a more fitting object. At this there had been much laughing; and Orion had secretly agreed with Chrysippus, and thought of Heliodora, her passion for fine, large jewels, and the memento that he still owed her. That neither father nor mother would subtract a single stone from the tapestry ere dedicating it to the Church was a thing not to be hoped for, but in fact, as their son, a portion of this superfluity ought to be his, and a handsomer gift for Heliodora than that large emerald could not be devised. Yes, she should have it, and what delight it would afford her! There even occurred to him an idea to be worked up into verse suitable for presentation with the gift.

He had upon his person the key to the *tablinum*, where the tapestry had been stowed away; and as he saw, upon his return, that people were still sitting by the fire, he locked the front hall door, and as he did so there came over him a mean feeling, such as he had last experienced when he had plundered forbidden fruit in company with his brothers. He was very nearly ready then to retreat from the foolish undertaking; and as the same pangs of remorse had crept over him in the *tablinum* itself, he was already on the point of turning around,

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when he reminded himself of Chrysippus and his encouragement. To turn and flee now would have been cowardice. Heliodora must have that big emerald with a copy of his verses; all the rest his father might give away to whomsoever he chose.

When he had knelt down in front of the tapestry that disagreeable troubled feeling came over him for the third time, and if the great emerald had not fallen into his hands at the first effort, he would most certainly have locked up the bale again and left the *tablinum* without having accomplished his purpose. His evil genius had come to his aid, however, had thrust the jewel into his hand, as it were, and enabled him, with two thrusts of his knife, to remove it from its setting, and as it had rolled into his hand and he had felt its immense weight, every misgiving banished, and he had thought only with satisfaction on the success of this bold game, which, next day, he should communicate to old Chrysippus, under the seal of secrecy, of course.

And how differently that rash, mad act looked to him now in the sober light of day; how severely had he been punished for it already; what consequences it might entail! His hatred to Paula increased more and more. She had certainly seen everything and would not hesitate to betray him. She had given proof of that yesterday. War had been declared between them, as it were; and with glaring eyes he said that he would not be the one to retreat. At the same time he could not hide it from himself that he had never seen her look more beautiful than she had done early this morning, as she confronted him defiantly, with her half-loosened hair falling over her shoulders. "There must be love or hatred between us two, nothing more moderate," murmured he to himself. "She has chosen the latter. Good! Hitherto my opponents have been only men; but this severe, haughty, uncompromisingly brave girl is no despicable adversary. For me the question here is one of necessity. If she does her worst toward me, I'll render her back measure for measure. And to whom did those sandals belong? I have made every preparation to find him. Shameful, shameful that I dare no longer hold up my head and look at myself in the glass! Heliodora has been a sweet creature, an angel of goodness. She loved me devotedly; but this, this one! Even for her this sacrifice is too great!"

So saying he pressed his hand to his forehead and threw himself on the divan. He might well feel tired; because he had not closed his eyes for more than thirty hours, and early in the morning as it was had already attended to many matters.

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The order had been given to the steward Sebek and the commandant of the Egyptian guards to search for the owner of the sandals and take him into custody. In the third place this young man, trained as he was to the severest bodily and mental exertions, gratifies his desire to indite a few lines to the fair Heliodora at Constantinople.

He had not forgotten the idea that had come into his mind before committing that burglary in the *tablinium*. He succeeded in putting it into verse and harmonizing it also with his present mood, and so they ran:

"TO HELIODORA:

"Birds of a feather flock together,
People have been told;
Then how can hardest stone delight
One of such gentle mold?"
Yes, noble 'tis, exquisite, priceless in worth,
Like Heliodora, the fairest of earth!
Remember, as gleameth this emerald's fire,
The flame in the soul of thy friend leapeth higher."

With flying stylus these lines were inscribed; and at the same time, he knew not himself wherefore, he was animated by the feeling that every word he wrote was a blow hurled at Paula.

Last night he had meant to have the precious stone worthily set ere its transmittal to the fair widow; but to-day that would have involved a mad risk to have the work done here. It must be sent off without delay, and quickly; with his own hand he had packed it up with the verses, and intrusted it to Chusar, the servant of a horse-dealer in Constantinople, and by him his four Pannonian steeds were driven to Memphis. He had just himself dispatched this trustworthy man, who understood no Egyptian and very little Greek, and returned home comforted after he had seen his horse vanish in a cloud of dust on the road leading to Alexandria. There were in the harbor very many ships making ready to set sail for Constantinople, and Chusar had been directed to avil himself of the very first good one. At least he had not committed that fell act in vain; and yet if it could be undone he would have been willing to sacrifice one year of his life.

"Impossible" and "accursed" were the words of which he made most diligent use in his retrospect of the past night. How had he been obliged to hustle and chase around in this burning heat, and the feeling of having been thereby forced to perform little covert acts seemed to him, who had hitherto done nothing that was unjustifiable in the eyes of honorable

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men, so humiliating that it brought the perspiration out upon a brow that was glowing hot without that.

He, Orion, must needs dread discovery like a thief. The thought was not to be endured, and he felt afraid, actually afraid, for the first time since he had been a boy.

His lucky star, that had shone upon him in the capital so brightly and kindly, seemed to be untrue to him in this tumble-down nest. What idea had danced through the addled brain of the Persian that she should have fallen upon him like a wild beast? What had he to do with her? He had only had a passing love affair with her—and which one of his young friends would have been blind to the charms of the pretty young slave-girls in the house? She had been a charming little thing; and she had been disgracefully mutilated, to his vexation, nay, even grief. If she got well, and he would have liked to pray for her recovery, then of course it was his affair to care for her—and how? Were he just, then he must admit that she was well justified in hating him; but the Damascene? To her he had done only what was friendly, yet nevertheless how unreservedly and openly had she displayed her animosity to him. He could see her standing before him with the word "murderer" upon her quivering lips. That word had penetrated him like a dagger thrust.

What a horrid, mean, unjust accusation was insinuated there! Should he let it pass unpunished?

Was she herself as scathelessly innocent as she was cold and proud? What had taken her into the *viridarium* at that time of night? For there she must have been before that wretched dog had dragged Mandana to the ground. There could be no mention of an assignation with the owner of the sandals discovered by his mother, for they belonged to an humble class of domestics. Love, said he to himself, was exceptionally out of the case here; but when he came home he had seen a man coming across the court-yard who had looked like her freedman, Hiram the jockey. Evidently she had been in consultation with the stammerer about—about—there was only one probable solution. She was planning a flight from his parents' house, and in this scheme needed this man's assistance.

In the first few hours after his arrival, even, he had become aware that life was not sweetened to her by his mother's instrumentality; and yet, perhaps, his father also had opposed her wish to seek a new home. But why did she flee? why did she hate him? During that sail and after they got home that evening he could have sworn that she loved him, and the mem-

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ory of those hours brought her quite close to him again and banished every thought of the revenge that he was meditating, the punishment that was to descend upon her. Then little Catharine came into his mind—the wife destined for him by his mother—and at the thought of her he chuckled to himself. In an imperial garden at Constantinople he had seen a strange Indian bird with quite a small body and head and an immense tail glistening in silver and pearl-enamel. Thus was Catharine! She herself was a tiny, wee, wee nothing; but she had appendages in the shape of broad lands and piles of money; and these, these alone were what his mother looked at. But did he need any more than he had already? How rich must his father be when he could bestow such an immense sum—in donation to a church—just as heedlessly as one gives alms to a beggar!

Catharine and Paula!

Yes, the little thing was lively and winsome enough; but Thomas's daughter—what power was in her eyes, what majesty in her step; how enchantingly musical could be the tones of—her voice—yes—her—

Here he fell asleep, overpowered by heat and weariness; and a dream showed him Paula resting upon a couch strewn with roses, the air being filled with wondrous strains of delicious melody. Her couch was not solid, but blue and gently undulating water; as he drew near to her suddenly a great black eagle pounced down upon him, beat him in the face with his wings, and while, half blinded, he shaded his eyes, the bird pecked at the roses upon the sleeper's couch just as a hen at dourrha and barley. Then he grew angry, rushed upon the bird and grasped at him with his hands; but his feet were rooted to the ground, as it were, and the more vigorously he struggled to move freely the more forcibly was he held back. Like a madman he fought against the force chaining him to earth, and suddenly became conscious of freedom. He felt its force upon him still, but at the same time woke up, and, dripping with perspiration, opened his eyes. His mother stood by his bedside, having laid her hand upon his foot in order to awaken him.

She looked pale and anxious, desiring him to follow her quickly to his father, who had been greatly disturbed and wished to speak with him. Thereupon she hurriedly left him.

While he hastily arranged his curls and had his sandals tied on he felt vexed that, wholly taken up as he had been by that foolish dream and stupid from sleepiness, he had allowed his mother to leave without acquainting him with the circum

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stances which had given rise to his father's disquiet. Was she aware of the proceedings of the past night? But no! Had they suspected him his mother would have notified and warned him. Something else must be in question. Perhaps the old merchant's stately caravan guide had succumbed to his wound, and his father wanted him to send over the Nile to the Mussulman regent of the valley of the Nile in order to sue for pardon on account of the murder of a Moslem committed in the governor's mansion. This death-blow might indeed entail serious consequences; meanwhile, something quite different might be the matter in point.

After he had left the room he felt peculiarly oppressed by the sultriness which brooded heavily over the house, and there seized him a painful feeling akin to shame as he crossed through the *viridarium* and cast a glance at the sod whence, before day-dawn, thanks to the ill-meant warning of the Damascene, he had carefully expunged the trace of his footsteps. How cowardly, how mean was all this! The highest good, viz., honor, self-respect, the proud consciousness of being an honest fellow, staked, lost for a mere nothing! He could have wept aloud like a child that has broken up his prettiest toy. But what good did all this? What was done could not be undone; and the thing to be done now was to keep one's eyes open in order to remain what he had been in the eyes of others, however low he had sunk in his own estimation.

In the open space surrounded by buildings it was glowing hot; not a creature was to be seen, and there was not a sign of life astir in the house; the gay-colored flag-staffs and espaliers, as also the pillars on the verandas, newly painted in honor of his home-coming, and still decorated with wreaths and garlands, spread abroad the (to him) disagreeable odor of melting resin, drying varnish and faded flowers. Although not a breath of wind stirred, the air quivered, and it seemed as though this was caused by the glowing rays of the sun, which like arrows darted at everything that came in their way. The butterflies and dragon-flies seemed to Orion to flit slowly about the shrubs and flowers; the fountain in the center of the *viridarium* did not play so merrily as usual, and the jet that it sent aloft looked lower; everything in the environs was hot, sultry, oppressive, and the once self-sufficient petted young man, who for years had been making a triumphal progress through life, protected by all good spirits, and freed from all restraint, now felt himself hampered, cramped, and perturbed in mind.

In his father's apartment, kept so cool by the fountain's spray, he drew a breath of relief, but it was only for an in-

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stant, then the blood faded out of his cheeks and he with difficulty commanded himself sufficiently to give his father a good-morning in the accustomed manner; for there, in front of the divan, whereon rested the governor as usual, lay the Persian tapestry, and near by stood his mother and the Arabian merchant. The steward Sebek in the background in an humble posture torturing to his rather aged back, was awaiting the orders of his master, who was accustomed never for long to suffer him to stoop.

A deep gravity overspread the Arab's mild features to-day, and his friendly eyes expressed sore trouble. Upon the entrance of the young man, whom he had already met earlier in the day, he bowed slightly.

The governor, who lay there ashy pale and with white lips, opened his eyes only slightly in recognition of his son's greeting. It was as though a coffin was in the next room, and the pall-bearers were in conclave here.

On the tapestry that was only half opened Orion immediately observed the spot where was missing the great emerald, which—he alone could know—was on its way to Constantinople. Its abstraction had been noticed. Into what a frightful, fatal form did this night now shape itself! "Courage, courage! Only do not lose presence of mind!" said he to himself. "What is life to me with loss of honor? Keep your eyes open; all depends upon that, Orion!"

And he succeeded in recovering self-control, and exclaimed in a tone that differed only a little from its usual spirited freshness:

"How you all look! What has caused such a commotion? It is, to be sure, a great misfortune that the dog should have served the poor girl such a trick, and that our people should have behaved so shabbily, but, as I told you awhile ago, worthy sir, the evil-doers are to be dealt with summarily. My father will, of course, commit the manner of punishment entirely to your discretion, and besides our surgeon Philippus is a second Hippocrates, in spite of his youth, believe me! He is successfully patching up that fine fellow, your caravan guide, I believe, and if the question of indemnity is to be raised, then will my father— You know that he is not niggardly—"

"Be pleased not to add insult to the injury that has been done me in this house," said the merchant, cutting him short. "No sum could indemnify me for the shed blood of a friend—for such a one was Hassan to me—brave, open-hearted fellow that he is! I shall insist upon the chastisement of the malefactors, for blood claims blood. So we think, and if your

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doctrines teach differently, your actions do not, as far as my observation goes. All honor to your surgeon, but it grieves me and rouses my temper when I see such things go on in the house of the man to whom the caliph has intrusted the weal and woe of the Egyptian Christians. Your boasted mildness has killed a good but humble man at a time of profound peace, or evidently maimed him for life. So far as honesty is concerned, it seems—"

"Who dares to impugn it?" cried Orion.

"He, young sir," answered the merchant, with the composure of the mature man, "who sees the goods that he sold yesterday robbed to-day of its most valuable ornament."

"The large emerald was torn out of the tapestry by night," remarked Lady Nephoris in an explanatory manner. "Last evening you went yourself with the men who bore it away and had it stored in the *tablinum* under your very eyes."

"In the cloth in which your own people had wrapped the tapestry," added Orion. "Honest old Sebek was standing by. Who removed the bale early this morning from its place, brought it here, and spread it out?"

"Fortunately for us," replied the merchant, "your lady mother in her own person, that man yonder—your steward if I mistake not—and your own slaves."

"Why did they not leave it where it was?" asked Orion, while he gave free course to the displeasure that actually mastered him at this moment.

"Because," replied the Arab, "with good reason. I assured your father that the beauty of this noble work of art and the brilliancy of the stones which adorn it would be far greater by day and sunlight than by the light of lamps and candles."

"Then your father wished to see his new possession again," interposed Nephoris, "and to ask the seller how jewels could best be loosened from the tapestry without destroying the woof itself. Thereupon I went into the *tablinum* with Sebek."

"But I have the key to it!" exclaimed Orion, feeling among the folds of his robe.

"We forgot that," continued the lady of the house. "Alas, it was not wanted, for the *tablinum* stood open."

"I locked it yesterday; you were there, Sebek."

"That was what I told mistress," replied the steward. "I well remembered hearing the click of the strong lock."

Orion shrugged his shoulders and his mother continued:

"But in the night the bronze door must have been opened with a pick-lock or something of the sort, for a bit of the tapestry was sticking out of its envelope, and upon looking

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closer, it was found that the emerald had been torn from its setting."

"Shameful!" cried Orion.

"Contemptible!" added the governor, starting vehemently from his couch. A great unrest and torturing anxiety had come upon him, for, his Lord and Saviour, for whom he had destined that costly jewel, seemed to regard him as too mean and sinful to accept it as a present from his hand. But perhaps Satan wanted to hinder him from drawing nigh to the Almighty with so magnificent a gift. At all events, the vileness of man had played its part here, and so he continued, sternly and hotly:

"The affair shall be investigated, and in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom the stone belonged, I will not taste of rest until the perpetrator is in my power."

"And in the name of Allah and the prophet," added the Arab, "I will stand by you, though I should have to call upon General Amr for help—he who is the noble caliph's representative in this country. A word has been let fall here that I can not and dare not forget, and the tone of which you made use, young man, seemed to spring from the same source. 'That old fox,' it was said, put a false stone of incredible size in the tapestry, and had it stolen, in order that his trick might not come to light when the jeweler should examine it by sunlight. That was too much! I am an honest man, gentlemen, and I must say in this place, a rich one likewise, and he who seeks to ruin in my old age the reputation which I have kept unsullied during a long life, the same shall learn to his hurt that stronger, mightier friends stand by old Haschim's side than might prove agreeable to him!"

The mild eyes of the merchant had moistened as he pronounced these threatening words, for it grieved him to see himself unjustly suspected, and to have to take so sharply to task the Mukaukas, for whom he felt respect, and who excited his compassion. From the tone of his discourse it was manifest that he was indeed a man of power and inflexible determination, and impressed with this, Orion called out in an animated manner: "Who dared to think so meanly of you?"

"Alas, your own mother," answered the Moslem, with downcast mien, in the Oriental fashion, shrugging up his shoulders in a way that expressed deep chagrin.

"Do not bear her any grudge," besought the Mukaukas. "God knows women have tenderer hearts than we have, and yet they are more inclined to think evil of their fellow-creatures, more especially if they are the enemies of their faith. To

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make up for it they are more quickly appreciative of the good. 'Woman's hair is long, but her reason short,' says the proverb!"

"What reproach is there that you do not bring against us women!" remarked Nephoris. "But find fault with me, find fault, if it affords you any relief." Then she continued, as she caressingly straightened up her husband's pillows, and handed him a fresh little white pill: "To-day I let them say their worst about me, for I am in the wrong. I have already begged your pardon, worthy Haschim, and do so once more from the bottom of my heart!"

So saying she approached the Arab, and gave him her hand. He only touched it lightly, however, and dropped it immediately, saying:

"It is not hard for me to forgive, but it would be impossible for me to sit down among you, or anywhere with even a grain of dust resting upon my fair name. I shall prosecute this affair to the end without looking to the right hand or the left. And now for a question: Is the dog that lay before the *tablinum* a sharp, good guard?"

"That he is sharp has been proved at the expense of that poor Persian slave, and his watchfulness is known to the whole household," cried Orion.

"But I implore you, worthy sir, in all our names, to help us with your experience," said Lady Nephoris. "I myself—wait—only wait! In spite of her long hair and short understanding, many a time woman has a happy idea. May be I am the first one to find a trace of the villain. It is clear the robber must belong to our household, because the dog did him no harm. Of Paula, the daughter of Thomas, who ran with such wonderful speed to the Persian's assistance, one can not think—"

Here her husband interrupted her, exclaiming indignantly: "My niece is not in the game, wife!"

"As if I took her for a rogue!" answered Nephoris, in an injured tone, shrugging her shoulders, while Orion exclaimed a little reproachfully: "But, mother, consider—" and the merchant put the question:

"Do you mean the young lady from whom I had to take such hard words yesterday? Well, then, I'll vouch for her innocence with my whole fortune. That beautiful, passionate creature is incapable of a base action."

"Passionate?" smiled Nephoris. "Her heart is as cold and hard as that stolen emerald; we have had experience of it."

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"And, nevertheless," cried Orion, "is capable of no meanness."

"How you men do take up for a pair of fine eyes!" said his mother, interrupting him. "But I had not the remotest idea of her; I had something quite different in view. There was a pair of men's shoes found lying near the wounded girl. Sebek, have you carried out Mr. Orion's orders?"

"Directly, madame," replied the steward, "and I have been waiting a long time already for the commands of the guard, that Samtik—"

Here he was interrupted, for the party named, who had been commander of the Mukaukas' home-guard for twenty years, was led into the room, and after he had answered a few preliminary questions, began to make his report in such a loud voice that it was painful to the governor, and his wife had to request him to speak more softly. The blood-hounds and terriers had been let loose after they had held the soles under their noses, and a couple had quickly found their way to the servants' gate, where Hiram had waited for Paula. Then they had stood still at the bottom of the steps, sniffed here and there, and then bounded up a few steps.

"And those steps lead to Paula's chamber," interjected Nephoris, shrugging her shoulders.

"But the terriers were on a false scent," interposed the commander of the guard, eagerly. "The toads might have brought innocent people under suspicion. Soon the whole pack rushed to the principal stables, where our finest horses are, and ran up and down there as Satan might do, at the back of a lost soul. The pack would soon have torn to pieces the boy of the freedman, who came here with the daughter of the great Thomas of Damascus, and in his father's dwelling what a hullaballoo there was! Heaven and earth! such a barking, howling and whining! They stuck their noses into every old rag, and now we knew where the hole in the wine-sack was. I am sorry about that man, for, cursed stammerer that he is, all honor to him as a jockey and manager of horses! Those sandals belong to Hiram as surely as my eyes are my own; but we haven't caught him yet. He is on the other side of the river, for a boat is missing, and where it had lain the howling was renewed. If the infidels over there do not take him under their protection we'll tree him surely!"

"Then we would have the criminal!" exclaimed Orion, at the same time drawing a deep breath, as if relieved of a heavy burden. Then he continued imperiously, and at the same time his voice assumed so fierce a tone that the flush which had

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a little while ago suffused his cheeks could hardly be attributed to joy at this last good news:

"If he is not back two hours after noon, then be after him with all your force, and wreak your vengeance upon him. My father will give you a warrant, and the Arabs over there will lend you aid. Perhaps the thief will fall into my hands earlier, and with him the emerald, for the rascal can not have made way with it or sold it!" Then he lowered his voice and continued in a tone of commiseration: "'Tis a pity for that man! We have no better jockey in the stable! Here is another confirmation of what you say, mother! If you want a good servant, buy a rogue!"

"Properly," said his mother, as though considering, "Hiram does not belong to our household. He is one of Thomas's freedmen, and came here with his daughter. Everybody praises his efficiency in the stable; but for this disgraceful act we would have kept him all his life; but if it had come into the maiden's mind to leave us and take him with her, we could not have held him back. Say what you choose, scold and abuse me, I have nothing of what you call power of imagination, and see things nakedly as they are; a certain connection must exist between that girl and the thief."

"You are to hush up those follies, once and for all!" said her husband, starting up, and he would have said more if at the same moment the chamberlain had not asked for an audience on behalf of the Israelite jeweler Gamaliel. The man had come to impart information concerning the lost precious stone.

Orion grew pale at this intelligence, and turned off from the merchant, while the same Jew entered who had been sitting by the fire with the officers the night before.

Without delay he began his report, in a lively manner, however, peculiar to himself. He was so rich that the threatened loss did not affect him seriously enough to completely spoil his good humor, and so honest that it delighted him to restore ill-gotten property to its rightful owner. Very early in the morning, he told them, the jockey Hiram had been to see him, in order to dispose of a wonderfully large and beautiful emerald. The freedman had assured him that the jewel belonged to the property left by the renowned Thomas, his former master. It had belonged to the head-gear of the war-horse which that hero had ridden from Damascus the last time, and with that it had fallen to him.

"I offered him," continued the man, "what seemed to me right, and gave him as earnest money two thousand drachmas; he offered meanwhile to trust me for the rest. I agreed to this,

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but a fly buzzed suspicion into my ear. Then the blood-hounds guided the bailiffs into the city. God be gracious to me, what a clatter! The creatures did as though they would bark my poor house to pieces—like the trumpets before the walls of Jericho, you know.

"'What's the news?' I asked of the master of the hounds, and lo! my suspicion had been as genuine as the emerald, and here, your highness, I bring the gem, and because every nursling in Memphis knows the voice of its nurse, if she is not dumb, I am confident that a just man like the great Mukaukas will make up to me for what I have advanced to that stammering rascal. You will be making a good bargain, at the same time, noble sir, for I do not even charge for the keeping of the jewel or interest during the two hours that it was mine."

"Give the stone here!" interposed the Arab, who had been vexed by the jesting tone in which the Jew had made his statement. Snatching the emerald from him he weighed it in his hand, held it close under his eyes, then again far off, tapped it with a little hammer which he drew out of his breast-pocket, fitted it into the place in the tapestry whence a stone had been abstracted, and then scrutinized it with glances, sometimes sharp, sometimes reflective, and finally contented.

While all this was going on, Orion had more than once changed color, and now clear drops of perspiration purled over his pale, handsome face. A miracle had been performed here. How could this stone, which was on its way to Alexandria, have gotten into the Jew's hands? Could Chusar have opened the little packet and sold its contents to Hiram, and through him to the jeweler? He must see clearly, and while the Arab examined the stone he approached the goldsmith and asked:

"Are you certain and sure—the thing at stake here is imprisonment or freedom—that you got the stone from the Syrian Hiram and nobody else? I mean, is the man so thoroughly well known to you that no mistake is possible?"

"My stars, young gentleman, how can you doubt it?" answered the Jew, retreating a step from Orion, who looked at him with sparkling eyes and threatening aspect. "Your worshipful father has known me for thirty years, and I, should I not know the Damascene? Who in Memphis stammers to the perfection that he does? Has he not imperiled the lives of half my children with your young demons of wild horses? I do believe he has half frightened to death every single one of them. Thank God, they are all alive and kicking in spite of him, but they are none the healthier on account of that jockey.

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Free air, you know, does children good, and my Rebecca is compelled to keep the little ones in the house when he is abroad playing his dreadful pranks."

"Well, well!" interposed Orion. "And at what hour did he offer you that emerald for sale? Be exact! Bethink yourself well! When was it? You must know."

"Adonis, how should I?" answered the Jew. "But only wait, sir, perhaps it may be ascertained even yet. While this heat lasts we are up before sunrise, then prayers, and our morning repast, then—"

"Twaddle!" urged Orion.

Gamaliel, however, continued, without allowing himself to be put out: "Then little Ruth jumps upon my lap, and pulls out the little white hairs that are sprouting from my nose, and as the child was thus amusing herself and I crying 'Ouch!' the sun had just reached the clay-bank, where that happened."

"And when did it reach the bank?" exclaimed the young man.

"Exactly two hours after sunrise," replied the Jew; "that is to say, at this season of the year. Do me the honor, to-morrow morning early, to repair to my house, and you will certainly not repent of it, for you will get to see beautiful wares, the rarest of gems, and look at the shadow yourself!"

"Two hours after sunrise," murmured Orion softly to himself; and then with a fresh thrill of horror reflected that he had not committed the packet to Chusar until four hours afterward. The Jew's assertion was not to be doubted. That rich, honest, and good-natured man did not speak falsely, and so the jewel sent away by himself and the one sold by Hiram could not by any possibility be the same. But what was the explanation of all this? It was enough to distract one. And not to be permitted to speak, when mere silence was fraud—fraud toward father and mother! If that unhappy stammerer only escaped! If they should bring him in; then, then—gracious heavens! But no, it was not to be thought of! Forward, then, only forward! And in case of extremity—the honor of a hundred jockeys was far from balancing that of one Orion—then abominable as it was, then he must be given up. To his getting free again, and his life being spared, he would and could see himself!

Meanwhile the merchant had completed his inspection and yet not arrived at perfect certainty.

Orion would gladly have interrupted it; for if the merchant gave up every doubt and recognized the stone brought back as

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the stolen one, much was gained; and so he turned to him again and said:

"Please show me that emerald once more; but then it is impossible to find a second one, is it not?"

"That is saying rather too much," replied the Arab, gravely. "This stone comes within a hair's breadth of being precisely like the one that was in the tapestry, yet it has here a little elevation that I never noticed in that one. To be sure it was never removed from its setting, and perhaps this hillock lay next the cloth; however, however, eh, goldsmith, did the thief hand you the emerald quite naked, without any setting?"

"Naked as Adam and Eve before they eat the apple," replied the Jew.

"Pity, pity!" cried the merchant. "It does seem to me, too, as if the stone in the tapestry were a trifle longer. In this case it is almost foolish and unreasonable to doubt; and yet I feel—I can not help asking myself, can this really be the stone that was in that bud?"

"But for Heaven's sake," exclaimed Orion, "fancy so rare a jewel falling out of the clouds into the same house the same day! Let us rejoice that the lost sheep has been found again. I'll shut it up now in the iron chest, father, and as soon as you catch the robber, have me called; do you understand, Samtik?"

Then he nodded to his parents, offered his hand to the Arab, and that in a manner that could not fail to charm every one, and that once more prepossessed the old gentleman in his favor, and left the room.

The reputation of the merchant was saved, yet the conscientious man felt disturbed on account of the doubt that he could not dispel. When he prepared to take leave of the Mukaukas he had sunk so far back among his pillows and kept his eyes so tightly closed that no one could discover whether he were awake or asleep. Therefore the Arab left without bidding him farewell, since in the latter case he was unwilling to disturb him.

CHAPTER X.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

After the great excitements of the past night, with throbbing pulses Paula had thrown herself upon her couch. Sleep fled from her; and so, two hours after sunrise, she stepped to the window in order to close its shutters. At the same time she looked out and saw how Hiram had leaped into one of the

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Mukaukas's boats and was shoving the light craft from shore. She durst neither call nor nod; but after the faithful man had gained the open water he had looked around, turning his face to her windows, recognized her in her white morning-gown, and cheerily waved his oar aloft. This could only signify that he had discharged his commission and sold her jewel. Now he was crossing the Nile in order to treat with the Nabbathæan.

After she had closed the shutters and darkened her chamber she once more lay down, and now youth asserted its rights, and the exhausted girl fell into a profound and dreamless slumber.

When she awoke with beaded brow, the sun had almost reached its zenith, and it lacked little more than an hour of the time for the *ariston*, that is to say, the Greek breakfast, which was partaken of by the assembled family, the main meal of the day following toward evening. She had never yet been absent from it; and her staying away would have attracted attention.

As in all Egyptian houses of distinction, Greek customs were followed in that of the Mukaukas rather than Egyptian; and this, with regard not only to meal-times but much else besides, especially the language. From the head of the house to its youngest member the family spoke Greek among themselves, and Coptic—the old language of the country—only with the servants. Even then many words and phrases of Hellenic origin had long since become familiar.

The governor's grandchild, pretty ten-year-old Maria, had learned to express herself correctly and fluently in Greek rather than Coptic; but when Paula arrived, she had not yet learned to write the beautiful language of the Hellenes. Paula loved children, longed for occupation, and had therefore volunteered to instruct her little cousin in this art; and at first her uncle and aunt had seemed to be delighted with the arrangement, but very soon the relation between Lady Nephoris and her husband's niece began to assume the disagreeable shape which it was to retain; and now the former had put a stop to the lessons, and given as the ground for this insulting proceeding that Paula had dictated to her pupil whole passages extracted from her orthodox Greek prayer-book. This had certainly been done, but with no sinister motive whatever; and the passages selected had only contained sentences calculated to elevate the soul of every Christian, no matter what was his creed.

The little girl had melted into tears upon hearing her grandmother's stern decree. Although Paula had been very grave

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during the lesson hours, nevertheless the little girl had conceived a tender regard for her, and with all the enthusiasm of a half-grown girl—such would be esteemed a child ten years old in Egypt—her warm heart clung to a beautiful being whom she considered her superior in every respect, and Paula's arms opened wide to receive the child, who poured sunlight into the dull frosty atmosphere of the life that she had led at her uncle's. But Nephoris saw something overstrained, unhealthy, yes, actually imperiling to the sound faith of the child in her passionate love for her Melchite relation; and it seemed to her as if Maria's affections had been sensibly withdrawn from herself since they had been so plenteously bestowed upon the Damascene. And this impression was not a false one, for the child's rare sense of justice had rebelled against seeing her friend misunderstood, slighted, and often judged most unjustly, and so Maria felt herself as bound, so far as in her lay, to make up to the lovely being whom she regarded as a piece of perfection, for her grandmother's maltreatment.

But Nephoris was not the woman to pass by unnoticed such conduct on the part of the little girl. She was her grandchild, her deceased son's only daughter, and nobody should come in between her and herself. Thus she forbade her visiting Paula in her chamber without special permission, and after a Greek governess had been employed for the child, particular orders were given her to keep her pupil aloof from her Damascus cousin as much as possible. All this only aroused the child's indignation, and tenderly as her grandmother would sometimes fondle her, and although devotion seldom allowed Maria to be out of her sight, yet there was no real congeniality between the two, and Paula was undoubtedly to blame for this, although against her will and merely by fault of her existence.

Openly and by manifold insinuations Lady Nephoris let her husband's niece feel that she was alienating her grandchild from her, and so nothing was left for Paula to do but to keep away from the child to whom she was so sincerely attached, and only show her occasionally all the fullness of her love.

At last the ills of life had so pressed upon her that she could no longer succeed in assuming a gayety foreign to her heart in being a child with children, and Maria noted well this change and ascribed Paula's altered manner to the sorrow inflicted by her grandmother's harshness.

Maria could most frequently speak with her friend before meal-times, for then nobody was paying any heed to her, and her grandmother had not prohibited her from summoning her friend to table.

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A visit to her room afforded the child the greatest gratification: for one reason, because it was a forbidden pleasure; but no less because Paula in her own room showed herself in an entirely different light from anywhere else, because there they could see each other undisturbed, kiss and talk as unreservedly as they pleased. There Maria confided to sympathetic ears all that passed in the circle of her little life; but admiration held back the lively, often hoidenish child from making a confidante concerning any impropriety or childish prank of one whom she regarded as superior to all others in every great, noble, and exalted quality.

Paula had just finished arranging her hair when Maria knocked modestly at the door—she who was wont to rush like a hurricane even into her grandmother's room. She did not fly at her like the widow Susannah and her lively daughter Catharine, but only kissed her white arm with fervent devotion, and then blushed for rapture as Paula bent over her, pressing her lips upon her hair and forehead while she wiped the moisture from her glowing countenance. Then she took Maria's head affectionately between her hands, and exclaimed:

"How you do look, my pet!"

Indeed, the little girl's sweet, pretty face was red as fire, and her eyes swollen as though she had been weeping violently.

"It is so terribly hot," answered Maria. "Eudoxia"—this was her Greek governess—"says that Egypt in summer is a fiery furnace, a hell upon earth. She is quite sick from the heat, lies there, like a fish on the sand, and the only good thing about it is—"

"That she lets you run and excuses you from lessons?"

Maria assented to this with a slight nod; but as no reproof followed, she turned her head aside and looked into her friend's face with a gleam of mischief darting from her large, expressive eyes.

"And still you have been weeping, and for what, a great big girl like you?"

"I? I weeping?"

"Yes, weeping! I can tell it by your eyes; just confess! What has troubled you?"

"You will not scold?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, then. At first it was so funny, so excessively funny, you can not think; and I did not mind the heat at all; but when the wild chase was over I wanted to go to my grandmother, and they would not let me. Something particular had been going on in the fountain-room, and as they had all

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gone out, I crept after Orion into the *tablinum*, where there are so many beautiful things, and then I wanted to scare him a bit; we used always to have such merry games together. At first he took no notice, but as he was stooping over the tapestry from which the precious stone had been filched—I believe he was counting over the jewels in the faded old thing—I quickly sprung upon his shoulder, and such a fright as he got! I tell you he was scared! And up he started like a game-cock, and —and he gave me a box on the ear, I tell you, a—it burns here still—and I saw every color of the rainbow. He used to be so kind and friendly to me, and to you too, and therefore—he is my uncle too—therefore I liked him ever so much, but a box on the ear, a slap, such as the cook gives his scullion! I tell you, I am too large for that; I'll not submit to it. Since my last birthday all the officers and slaves have had to treat me like a lady, and bow down before me. And now? It struck right here. How dare he?" Hereupon she began to cry, and continued, sobbing: "But that was not enough. He shut me up in the dark *tablinum* and left"—here her tears flowed more profusely—"left—me—sitting there! It was so bad; and I might be shut up there now if I had not found a piece of gold plate and fallen to with it beating upon the silver effigy of my great-grandfather—Menas, I mean—and I hallooed 'fire' besides. Sebek heard this and fetched Orion, who set me free, treating me as politely as you please, and kissing me too. But what good does that do? for grandfather will be angry with me because, in my distress, I beat his sainted father's nose quite flat with that plate."

Paula had listened to the child sometimes gravely, sometimes smilingly; but after she had finished her story she once more wiped her eyes and said:

"Your uncle is a man with whom you can not play as with a person of your own size. As for the rest, the reminder that you got was a pretty severe one; but you see Orion tried to make it all up again. But what was that you were saying about a 'wild chase'?"

At these words, Maria's eyes suddenly brightened up. In a trice all her woes, even the flattened nose of her ancestor, were forgotten; and with a merry peal of laughter gushing from the depths of her soul, she called out:

"Oh, you just ought to have seen that! You would have been amused at it too! They wanted to catch the rogue who had filched the emerald out of the tapestry. He had lost his sandals, and these were held under the dogs' noses and then they broke loose! First they came to the steps here, then they

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rushed to the stable, then to the house of a jockey—I behind them all the time, after the terriers and the other barking crew. Then a council was held, and lastly they went out the gate into the city. I ought not to have left the yard, but—do not be angry with me—it was just too funny! Out of the gate they dashed, through Hapi Street, across Taanch Square, and lastly to Goldsmith Street, and then the whole pack rushed into the shop of Gamaliel the Jew, who is such a witty man. While he was talking with the rest his wife brought me an apricot tartlet —ever so much nicer than any we have at home."

"And have they caught the man they were pursuing?" asked Paula, whose cheeks had repeatedly changed color at the last words of the child.

"I don't know," answered Maria, looking puzzled, "they were not following anybody in particular. The dogs just kept their noses to the ground all the time, and we ran after them."

"Yes, but only to catch the unhappy man who certainly has nothing to do with the robbery: only reflect a little, Maria. Those sandals supplied the scent to those dogs, and they harked them on to seize the man who had worn them, and who, as yet, had not been heard by any judge. They were found in the vestibule; probably he left them there accidentally, or somebody else may have carried them there. Put yourself in the place of this unfortunate man, a Christian like ourselves, whom they are pursuing with a pack of hounds like a wild beast. Is it not dreadful? A good person ought not to laugh at any such thing."

Paula said this so emphatically, with such earnestness and evident distress that the child looked up at her tearfully, as if already penitent, and hurrying up to her she buried her face in her lap and exclaimed:

"I did not know that they were hunting down a poor man; and if it grieves you so much, I am sorry that I was there! But is it really so bad? You are so often sad when the rest of us are laughing!" At the same time she looked up at Paula questioningly, her large eyes glistening with tears. Her friend drew her closer to her, kissed her fondly, and then answered, with mournful tenderness:

"I would gladly be as cheerful as you are; but I have passed through so much trouble that it makes me sad. Laugh and be merry to your heart's content. I am really glad of it for your sake; but as for that poor, hunted man I am afraid that it is my father's freedman, the truest, most honest of men. Did they drag nobody out of the goldsmith's shop when you were running that merry race?"

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Shaking her head in the negative the child asked:

"Is the jockey, your stammering Hiram, the man of whom they are in pursuit?"

"I am afraid so."

"Yes, yes," said the little girl. "Just wait. They— Oh, dear! it will trouble you again—I do believe—they did say they had his shoes—I did not pay much attention. The talk was all the time about a freedman, a stammerer."

"Then they have certainly pursued an innocent man," cried Paula, with a heavy sigh, again seating herself at her toilet-table in order to finish dressing.

While her hands were moving as best they could, she sunk into a profound reverie, answered the child only by monosyllables, and let her fumble about in her open trunk, and Maria drew forth the ornament whence so handsome a jewel had been abstracted and flung it around her neck.

Again there was a knock at the door, and Catharine entered, the widow Susannah's little daughter, the young girl with whom the Mukaukas's wife wanted to wed her handsome son; but she looked pretty and plump; neat too as a new pin; and, moreover, she had a fresh, blooming, attractive little face. When she laughed she showed two rows of small, white teeth, set far apart from one another, and her clear eyes looked out upon the world as gladly as though she expected naught but contentment there or material for harmless amusement. She, too, was an applicant for Paula's favor, but by no means with the whole-souled enthusiasm of Maria. Many a time, indeed, she was so demonstrative in her affection that the elder girl had to check her, but on the other hand she would turn her back on the Damascene with anger, disdain and pouting, if she had treated her at all coolly or seemed to think less of her than Maria. To be sure, it rested with Paula to put a stop to this pettishness on the part of the "humming-bird," that usually had a comic aspect, by a pleasant word or a kiss, and yet without such friendly advances Catharine would have been capable of indulging in ill-temper to the end. To-day she threw herself on her bosom, and when Paula begged her, more positively than usual, please to allow her first to complete her toilet, without seeming to be hurt in the least, she joined little Maria and took the necklace out of her hand in order to try it on herself. Beautifully wrought and set with pearls as it was, she was wonderfully pleased with it, only the empty case whence Hiram had cut the emerald with his knife spoiled the whole in her eyes. It was still, however, a regal ornament, and after she had taken a great bunch of ostrich feathers

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out of the trunk, she showed her little friend, with comical assumed dignity, how the empress and the princesses at court bowed and nodded graciously to their subjects. This gave rise to a great deal of laughing, but when Paula's toilet was at last complete, and she attempted to take the ornament away from Catharine, the empty case, bent by Hiram's knife, hung in the light lace of her overdress. Maria picked it loose, and Paula threw the necklace back into the trunk.

While she locked this she asked Catharine if she had met Orion.

"Orion?" repeated she, in a tone as though nobody save herself had the right to ask after him. "We two came up together; he wanted to see after the wounded. Have you anything to say to him?"

At this she blushed and looked suspiciously at Paula, who, however, only replied by a careless "perhaps," and then called out while she hung the ribbon around her neck to which her trunk-key was attached:

"Come, girls, it is time now for breakfast. I am not going down to-day."

"Ah," said Maria, in a tone of disappointment, "grandfather is very weak and grandmother has to stay with him, and if you will not come either, then—then I must eat by myself with Eudoxia, for Catharine's chariot is waiting, and she has to go home again directly. Oh, do come! Do so for my sake; you do not know how horrid Eudoxia can be when the weather is so hot."

"Yes, go with her!" pleaded Catharine. "What in the world is to keep you up here? As for the rest, toward evening I'll come again with mamma."

"Pleasant," answered Paula, "but I must visit the sick first."

"May I go with you?" asked the humming-bird, coaxingly, caressing her arm; but Maria clapped her hands and cried:

"She only wants to go where Orion is; she is so fond of him—"

Hereupon Catharine stopped the child's mouth, but when Paula had signified to her, with quicker breath, that she wished to speak with Orion concerning very grave matters, Catharine turned her back upon her with a quick, defiant gesture, and went upstairs pouting, while Maria glided down the same upon the balusters. A few days before Catharine, who was hardly sixteen years old, would have gladly followed her in the same way.

Paula, meanwhile, knocked at the first of the sick rooms

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and approached it as softly as it was opened by the nurse, a nun from the convent of St. Catharine. Orion, whom she sought, had been there, but left a short time before.

In the first apartment lay the wounded caravan guide, in the second the deranged girl. In a hall adjoining the first room, which was beautifully furnished, having been destined for distinguished guests, sat two men absorbed in conversation. They were the Arabian merchant and the surgeon Philippus. The latter was not much over thirty years of age, and was a very tall, raw-boned young man, whose clothing consisted of neat but coarse stuffs, devoid of any ornament whatever. He had a pale, intellectual countenance, lighted up by brilliant black eyes expressing amiability as well as keenness and animation. His high cheek-bones were much too prominent, the lower part of his face was small, ugly, pinched, as it were, while his lofty and broad brow crowned the whole as appertaining to a philosopher, as a glorious cupola sets the seal of worth upon a plain, insignificant edifice.

This man, devoid of grace as he was, would nevertheless have hardly been overlooked in any circle of men, however distinguished-looking, on account of the striking individuality of his physique. He had just been engaged in an animated conversation with the Arab, who, during a two days' acquaintance, had conceived a high regard for him, which was fully reciprocated.

At last their discussion turned upon Orion, and the physician, an indefatigable worker, who had no respect for anybody who led an idle life of pleasure, after making all due recognition of his excellent parts and fine school record judged him more harshly than the old gentleman. To the physician all human existence was sacred, and everything seemed to him worthy of annihilation that threatened to destroy the body or soul of a man. The ruin that Orion had brought upon the unhappy Mandana was known to him as well as the manner in which he had trifled with the affections of many other women, and these things constituted him, in his eyes, a hurtful and dangerous member of society.

With him life was an obligation, which was discharged by work, no matter of what sort, so that it benefited the whole; but young gentlemen of Orion's stamp did not recognize this obligation at all, but brought the whole world under contribution for their own mean, selfish aims. With the aged Moslem, on the contrary, life was a dream, the fairest part of which, youth, each one should enjoy with open senses, and only be solicitous that he might indulge the hope of admission to Para-

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dise when the awakening came which began at death. How little could man do against the iron force that fate suspended over him! Neither could this be averted by earnest labor. The only thing to do was to assume the right position with reference to it, and meet it with dignity. Orion's fate had laden his ship of life too lightly; in fine weather it sailed away whithersoever the wind drove it. He himself had been anxious to equip it well, and if fate should freight it heavily, right heavily, and dash it against the cliffs, then would it be seen for the first time who and what it was; he, Haschim, confidently believed that then his character would prove to be excellent. A man is put to the proof in a shipwreck.

Here the doctor put in a word to prove that not the Kismet of the Moslems, but man himself guides the ship of life; but just now Paula looked in and interrupted him.

The merchant bowed reverentially, Philippus respectfully, but with more embarrassment than would have been expected from the general ease of his manners. For some years past he had been a daily guest at the governor's mansion, and after purposely overlooking Paula in the beginning when Lady Nephoris assumed an inimical attitude toward her, he drew her out as much as possible. Talks with him, which were in a sharp, cutting tone at first, had been anything but agreeable to her, so that she had often abruptly terminated them in a rather supercilious manner; but long ago she had learned to enjoy them, and now they were almost a necessity. They kept her mind awake in a circle that busied itself only with the small concerns of families dwelling in this ruinous city or with dogmatic controversies; for the Mukaukas seldom or never took part in the talk of the women.

The physician never conversed with her about current events, but lay before her his own views or the opinions of others concerning grave questions of life, or they talked about books familiar to them both, and she knew how to raise questions which he answered with wit and sharpness. By and by she had grown accustomed to his cold mode of thinking, and sincere, often recklessly candid speech, and the intellectually gifted girl now preferred conversation with him to any other kind of social intercourse, having discerned in this thinker, this compendium of all knowledge, a truly child-like simplicity, and, moreover, an unparalleled unselfishness. The most that she did displeased her uncle's wife, and so did this confidential association with this man, whose outward appearance was anything but attractive to a young girl. But the physician of a noble family was employed to heal them, and it was unbe-

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coming to carry on confidential discourse with him as with an equal. She reproached Paula, whose pride she often wounded, with unbecoming condescension, but most of all did it vex her that the Damascene engrossed many a half hour that Philippus would otherwise have devoted to her husband, in whom her affections centered, and to whose health, with her, everything had reference.

The Arab had immediately recognized his opponent of the evening before, and after the friendliest understanding had quickly ensued between them, and Paula had confessed how foolish it had been of her to make a well-disposed individual responsible for the ill doing of a whole nation, and Haschim had replied that a kind heart always rights itself, she turned the conversation upon her father, and the physician informed the Arab that she was unweariedly searching for one of whom every trace had disappeared.

"Rather, it is the sole task of my life!" cried the young lady.

"And wrongly so, I think," remarked the physician; but the merchant disagreed with him, for there were things too precious ever to give up as lost, even though the hope of finding them again became thin and weak as a rotten straw.

"I feel that way too!" cried Paula; "and Philip, how can you oppose me? Have I not heard from your own mouth that you never gave up hope of your patients until they were in the very arms of death! I hold fast to mine now more than ever, and feel that it is right so to do. I shall devote my last thoughts, my last penny to finding my father without help from my uncle and his wife, and in spite of their opposition."

But in affairs of this kind a young lady can ill do without the help of a man," replied the merchant. "I go around the world a great deal, talk with many a stranger from foreign lands, and if you would do me an honor, nominate me your coadjutor, allow me to be your confederate in this search after the noble warrior, whose disappearance is so deplorable."

"Thanks, fervent thanks!" cried Paula, seizing the Moslem's hand with joyful warmth. "Keep my lost one in remembrance wheresoever you go. I am a poor, forsaken girl, but if you find him—"

"Then you will know that there are men among the Moslems—"

"That gladly exercise charity and kindly aid defenseless women," interposed Paula.

"And if the Most High so please, with good results," replied the Arab. "Just as soon as I find a trace you are to

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hear from me, but now I must cross the river to General Amr. I go comforted, because I know that my poor, honest Hassan is in good hands, friend Philip! The first investigation is to begin in Fostat; you may depend upon it, my daughter."

"I do," answered Paula, in joyful agitation. "When shall we meet again?"

"To-morrow; at latest, day after to-morrow early."

Then the girl approached him and whispered:

"We have discovered a clew now, sir; yes, I hope that the messenger is already on the way. Have you time enough to listen to me?"

"Properly I should have crossed the river long ago; not then to-day, but to-morrow, I hope." So saying the Arab shook hands with both her and the surgeon, then quickly withdrew.

Paula stood still absorbed in thought; then it occurred to her that the hunted Hiram on the other side of the river was in the domain of Arab power, and that the merchant, perhaps, might intercede for him if she should communicate to him all that she knew. She was filled with great trust in the old man, whose kindly, sympathetic glance still haunted her, and without paying further heed to the doctor, she hurried up to the door of the first sick-chamber. At the side of this hung a crucifix, and the nun had cast herself on her knees before it, in order to pray for the infidel patient, and beseech the Good Shepherd to pity this sheep outside His fold.

Paula did not venture to interrupt the devotions of the worshiper, who knelt before the small passage, and so several minutes passed, until the physician remarking her great uneasiness, left the hall, touched the nun's shoulder, and thus appealed to her in low and persuasive tones:

"One moment, dear sister! Your pious prayer is always heard, but this young lady is in a great hurry."

The nun arose immediately, stepped back, and gave Paula a look of indignation as she went out rapidly and hastened down the stairs.

Before the gate leading into the court-yard her eye sought the Arabian, but in vain. Then she inquired of a slave, and found out that the merchant's horse had been waiting a long while before the gate, but that he had just galloped off and was probably already at the bridge of ships which united Memphis with the island of Rhoda, and the latter with Fort Babylon and the newly sprung-up Fostat.

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CHAPTER XI.

A SYMPOSIUM INTERRUPTED.

TROUBLED and angry with herself, Paula went back upstairs. Was it the heat of the day that had enervated her and deprived her of the presence of mind that was hers of right? She did not understand herself now why she had not immediately availed herself of the opportunity to intercede with Haschim for that trusty servant. Perhaps the merchant might have been able to do something for Hiram. The slave at the gate had told her that he had not been caught; the time to intercede for him had not then come; but she would do so, would endure the brunt of her kinsman's anger, and, if it must be, betray everything that she had seen in the night, for the sake of saving that true man. This was her duty, yet before she did it, before she so deeply humiliated Orion, she would warn him. The thought of being obliged to accuse him of so reckless a deed pained her like the necessity of inflicting a hurt upon herself. She hated him, but she would rather have demolished the fairest work of art than have branded him whose image still swayed her soul as the embodiment of all masculine perfection.

Instead of joining Maria at breakfast, or offering to play draughts with her invalid uncle, perhaps a talk with the physician would divert her mind somewhat. After the varied excitements of the last hours she longed for something, no matter what, to brighten her up and suggest new ideas.

In the first sick-chamber the nun coolly asked what she wanted there, and who had given her leave to take a share in the nursing. Then the doctor turned to the nun and told her decidedly that he desired the young lady's assistance, and that, too, in the treatment of both patients. Thereupon he preceded Paula into the hall and remarked to her, in a subdued voice:

"All should be in order first. Let us sit here for a little while."

Then he led her to the sofa, and seated himself in a chair opposite to her, after which he thus opened conversation: "Just now you were looking for the handsome Orion, but now you must—"

"What?" asked she, earnestly. "I would have you to know that the son of this house is no more to me than his mother. With your 'handsome Orion' something must have

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been meant which I should not like to hear again. Nevertheless I must speak with him, directly too, about a matter of importance."

"What, then, procures me the gratification of seeing you again? To confess candidly, I did not expect your return."

"And why not?"

"Excuse me from answering. People do not willingly listen to unpleasant truths. If a person deems one of us not exactly sound—"

"If that is meant for me," answered the girl, "I can tell you that the only good thing about me is my health. Just speak out! Tell me the worst of myself. I need something to-day to rouse me from lethargy, even though it should anger me."

"Well, then," answered Philippus, "and yet I'm venturing into perilous water. As for health—what people call so—any fish may envy you; but of the higher health, viz., that of the soul—I am afraid that you can not boast."

"That is a formidable beginning," replied the girl. "It would seem, from your reproach, that I have wronged you or somebody else."

"How could you!" cried the doctor. "We have nothing to complain of as coming from you. I am that I am; you think of yourself, and what are others to you?"

"The thing in point is, what do you understand by these 'others'?"

"No less than all around you now, those in the house here, in this city, in the world. To you they are air and less than that; for the air is a body whose power fills sails and impels ships to stem the current, whose changeful nature affects the ill- or well-being of the body—"

"My world is here inside," replied Paula, and laid her hand upon her heart.

"Quite right. The whole creature ought to have a place there; for what is commonly called a human heart, how much can it embrace? The more one plans to inclose within it the more capacious does it become. It is dangerous to let the lock to it rust, for as soon as that happens, and one tries to open it, no amount of pulling and tugging helps. And then—but I would not hurt your feelings—you have accustomed yourself to looking backward and backward only."

"And pray what pleasant prospect lies before me? Your censure is severe and hardly justifiable. How do you know the direction of my thoughts?"

"Because I have followed you with the eyes of a friend. In

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sooth, Paula, you have forgotten how to look about you and to the future. What lies in retrospect, what is lost, that constitutes your world. I once showed you, in a crumbling papyrus-roll of my old foster-father Horus Apollo, a heathenish demon, who advances, while his head is so fixed on his neck that the face and eyes look behind."

"I remember it well."

"Now, you have resembled such a demon for a long while. 'Everything flows,' says Heraclitus, and you are forced to swim forward with the great stream; or, if we alter the figure, you must move forward on the highway of life to the universal goal; yet at the same time absorbed in the contemplation of a father's large, delightful mansion, rich in love and tenderness, the lovely and majestic shapes of a home happy, but, alas! gone, never to return. At the same time you move forward, and what must follow as a matter of course?"

"I must stumble, you think, and fall—"

The more keenly Paula felt the doctor's reproaches the less could she conceal it from herself that they included much that was true. She had come to be cheered up; but now these accusations had disturbed her equilibrium. Why should she be taken to task like a school-girl by this man who was by no means aged? If this was the way it went, then he should get to hear. But already his answer followed, and again she felt refreshed, and her conviction strengthened that he was her true, well-meaning friend.

"Perhaps not that," was the tenor of his rejoinder, "because—because—well, destiny has blessed you with the fairest symmetry, and like a hero's daughter you move forward with perfect self-possession. Let us not forget that I speak of your soul, too, that maintains intact its inborn nobility amid so much that is petty and mean."

"Why, then, need I shun retrospection that does me good?" interposed she, with animation, looking him in the face with renewed spirit.

"Because thereby you step lightly upon the feet of others! That does harm; they get angry with you, they learn to dislike you who are more amiable than themselves."

"Unjustly, too, for I am unconscious of having willingly hurt the feelings of any human being since I have been in the house."

"I know; but unconsciously you have done so a thousand times."

"Then it were best that I should flee them entirely."

"No! a thousand times no! He who withdraws from the

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rest of the world and retires within himself, thinks that he is doing some great thing and exalting himself above an existence that he despises. But investigate a little more closely: self-interest and self-love drive him into dens and caverns; in any case, in order to attain what he considers his good, he neglects the highest duties to humanity, or, shall we say, to the society to which we belong? It is a great corporation, and every individual is to consider himself as a member of it, seek to be serviceable and beneficial to it, and even when necessary show itself ready to make sacrifices for it. The heaviest are not too heavy. Who then stands upon his ground but you—no, please hear me to the end, for I shall hardly venture a second time to expose myself to the danger of incurring your anger—you want to be all in all to yourself. What Paula has been and suffered she keeps locked up in the treasure-house of her recollections behind bar and bolt. What Paula is, she thinks that she is obliged to be, and for what? Again only for this same Paula. She has experienced great sorrow, and her soul lives upon it; but this diet is to be rejected as unhealthy and bad."

Then she wanted to rise, but he bowed down before her, carried away by his earnestness and full conviction of the importance of what he was urging upon her; he casually touched her arm as though he would induce her to keep her place on the sofa whether or no, and continued, without allowing himself to be interrupted or disconcerted:

"You feed upon old sorrow! And beautiful is such sensibility! A hundred times have I seen it; pain can ennoble. It can render exalted souls capable of feeling more deeply the griefs of others; it can arouse in them the desire to mitigate the sufferings of others by sharing their burdens. He who is familiar with pain and woe enjoys comfort and pleasure with redoubled zest; the sufferer learns, too, to enjoy the little blessings of life with gratitude. But you? For a long while I have been striving after the courage to say this to you; and yet you extract no benefit from sorrows because you hug them up closely like precious seeds that one carries around with him in a silver casket. Let one bury pain in the ground that it may germinate and bear fruit. And yet I would not criticise. I would only advise, advise as your truest, most devoted friend. Teach yourself to feel as a member of the body with which fate has associated you, whether you like it or not. Make up your mind to do all that lies within you to promote the general weal. You will find that you will succeed in being something to your fellows, and forthwith the casket will open, and you will perceive with astonishment and joy that the seeds which you scat-

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tered on the ground have sprung up, that blossoms are unfolding, and fruits maturing, from which may be garnered food or nourishment for yourself and others! Then, as the Bible says, 'let the dead bury their dead,' and consecrate to the living those rich powers and fair gifts which have become your portion as a natural inheritance from a noble father and mother; yea, a long line of glorious ancestors. Then will you regain what you have lost; that joy in existence which pervades our being, and which we ought to dispense, because it includes within itself an obligation, which it is granted to us to perform only a single time. A propitious destiny has formed you to be loved above hundreds of thousands, and if you do not forget the gratitude due for this, then will hearts be drawn to you who hitherto have resembled a tree set about with prickly thorns, whose boughs, too, drooped like the weeping willow of the Nile, and you will lead a new and more beautiful life, blessing and blessed. Out of the barren, joyless existence that you have been wearily leading here, adding nothing to the happiness of any, more especially yourself, you will rise to a fresher, purer atmosphere, clarified by the sweet consciousness of living to do good. It rests with yourself to taste of such satisfying bliss. In coming here to nurse these unfortunates you have already taken the first step on the new road that I would direct you to as leading to true happiness. I did not expect to see you here, and am grateful for your coming, because I know that admission at this door ushers you into a higher plane of existence, where you will find ample scope for the development of your exceptional powers both of heart and mind. Thank God I have delivered my message!"

So saying, the doctor arose; and while he wiped the perspiration from his brow he looked solicitously at Paula, who, drawing a deep breath and looking more bewildered and undecided than he had ever seen her, still retained her seat. She pressed her hand to her forehead and silently looked down as though struggling to suppress pain.

Seeing this the young man clapped his arms together just as a workman does when his hands have been frozen in the cold winter-time, and painfully agitated, exclaimed:

"Yes, I ought to have spoken, and can not repent of having done it; but what I foresaw is now coming to pass. I am to lose the best joy that sweetens for me my every-day life! It is a fine command to love Plato, but truth is better worth loving than Plato; and yet whoever does so must just be prepared for this truth scaring away friends from the uncomfortable nearness to this poor apostle of truth."

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Here Paula arose, and obeying the impulse of her good heart, cordially extended her right hand to the doctor. He grasped it with both hands and pressed it so hard that it almost pained the girl, as with glistening eyes he exclaimed:

"I hoped it would be so; this is grand, this is noble! Would that I might be your brother, glorious maiden! Come, now! If that poor, beautiful creature there, deranged and mortally wounded as she is, could be healed by any hand it would be yours!"

"I come," she replied, warmly; and there was something healthy and cheerful in her manner as she approached the sick-room; yet midway the expression of her features altered, and thoughtfully she proposed this question: "Given that we do restore this unfortunate to health, what good would it do her?"

"She will breathe and bask in the light of day," answered the surgeon. "She will be grateful to you, and in her turn benefit her fellows to the extent of her ability; finally she will enjoy the supreme good of life—for after all do you not realize it?—life is the highest gift!"

Paula gazed with astonishment upon the transfigured appearance of this ordinarily homely man. His countenance glowed with enthusiasm, and it fairly shone with rapture.

At this moment nobody could have pronounced him ugly and unattractive.

He believed in what he had declaimed with such ardor, and yet he contradicted the view which he had only yesterday expressed and so frequently defended, viz., that life is a wretched thing to one who knows not how to take hold of it with energy and make something out of it. At this instant it really was to him the chief good.

Paula preceded him, and his eye hung upon her as does that of the pious pilgrim upon the image of the saint, to see which he has crossed over seas and mountains with bleeding feet.

Now they approached the patient's bed. The nun retired before them and had her own thoughts concerning the doctor's altered manner, and the rapturous, child-like cheerfulness with which he explained to Paula what danger threatened the wounded girl, what plan of operations he meant to pursue in order to save the poor creature, how to make plasters, apply medicaments, and how necessary it was, so long as the fever lasted, to indulge the whims of her sick brain and treat her as if her thoughts were rational.

Finally he had to withdraw in order to visit other patients; but Paula remained sitting at the head of the sick girl's bed and looking at her face.

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How beautiful it was!

"And this rose had Orion broken when a bud, and shamefully trodden upon! Probably she had felt the same for him as herself. And now? Did she feel nothing more for him than hatred, or did her heart, like that of this poor thing with all the resentment, all the contempt it felt, find itself still under the spell of enchantment with which he had once ensnared it?

But what shameful feelings were these? She must and would be his foe!

And now she looked thoughtfully back upon the idle and unprofitable life that she had been leading for some years past. The physician's words had hit the right mark; yes, they had been too mild rather than too severe. Yes, she wanted to begin now and expend her strength in behalf of others; but how, in what manner? here, and among these people? How glorified had poor Philippus seemed when she offered him her hand, and how eloquent had been his discourse!

"How false," thought she, "is the saying that the body is the mirror of the soul! If this were so, then Philippus would look like Orion, Orion like Philippus." But could the heart of the other be wholly corrupt? It was not possible; and all that was in her struggled to believe it. She *must* love or hate him; there was no middle ground left; but these two feelings wrestled and struggled together in an unbearable manner.

The physician wished to be her brother; and at that thought she could but smile. Calmly contented she might live housed with him, her faithful nurse, and the learned old friend who shared his house, of whom he had often spoken, pursue his studies, aid him in his calling, and converse with him on many topics worth knowing. Such a life, said she to herself, would be a thousand times preferable to being housed with Aunt Nephoris.

Assuredly she had found a friend in him, and that she was willing to recognize him as such brought the first fulfillment of his prophecy, for it showed that she could appreciate the highest proof of friendship, viz., faithful reproof.

All of these deliberations were interspersed continually with apprehensions for the threatened Hiram, and at the same time it was impressed upon her mind that if matters came to extremity between herself and Orion, her further sojourn in the governor's mansion would be impossible. How often had she ardently desired the opportunity to leave it; but now she shrunk from it; for parting with her uncle included separation from

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his son likewise. She abhorred him, but to lose sight of him forever was, nevertheless, hard to bear.

To follow Philippus, to abide with him as a sister, would not do at all. It struck her as something not to be thought of—wonderfully incongruous.

Amid all these reflections she listened for the patient's breathing, and treated her as the physician had directed. She longed for his return; but instead of him the nun stepped up to the bed, laid her hand on the patient's brow, felt her pulse, and whispered affectionately to her, without paying any attention to Paula:

"Right so, child, only sleep, sleep on nicely! How sweetly she rests; if it would only stay so! Her head has gotten cooler. Certainly Philippus would hardly call that fever! God be thanked! The worst danger is past!"

"Oh, how delighted I am!" cried the girl; and these words expressed so much sincerity and warmth that the nun nodded at her approvingly, and henceforth was well pleased to commit the sick into her hands.

Paula had not felt so happy for a long while. It struck her that her presence had had a good effect upon the patient, as if Mandana had reached the threshold of a new life through her brief nursing. Paula, who a short time before had deemed herself a being persecuted by destiny, breathed freely in the thought that she too could cause happiness. Cheerfully, and with true tenderness, she looked into the more than pretty face of Mandana, adjusted the bandage, which had been somewhat disarranged, so that it concealed her mutilated ears, and breathed a soft kiss upon her long, silken eyelashes.

The intelligent nun began to like the Damascene more and more, and when her hour for prayers returned she included in them Paula, the orphan in a strange house, who, through God's unsearchable wisdom, had been born a Greek, outside of her own saving faith.

At last Philippus came back, rejoiced in his new friend's more cheerful exterior, and confirmed the impression that Mandana had withstood the first, most imminent danger, and had every prospect of slow but sure recovery.

After Paula had renewed the bandage, which he purposely allowed her to arrange unaided, he said, encouragingly: "How quickly you have learned to nurse! There, the girl is asleep again already; the sister will watch by her, and, for the present, we can render our patient no further assistance, for slumber is the best diet in the world for her. With us it is different, at least with me it is. We have two hours yet to

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wait before dinner; my breakfast is over yonder still untouched, and it has been the same case with yours. Be my guest then! They always send me enough to satisfy six woodsawers."

This proposition was acceptable to Paula; for she had long been feeling the pangs of hunger. The nun was commissioned to fetch quickly a few more plates; there was no lack of glasses, and so the two new friends were soon breakfasting opposite one another, each at his or her own table.

He carved the duck and broiled quails, set before her the salad and smoking artichokes, which the nun had brought up, at the desire of the cook, whose only little boy had been saved by the doctor, drew her attention to the little patties, fruits and cakes that were there besides, played cupbearer, and while they eat and drank with relish, they engaged in a lively conversation.

Paula informed herself to-day, for the first time, about the circumstances of Philippus's youth, and he began with an account of his present life, passed in the companionship of that wonderful old servant of Isis, and philosopher, Horus Apollo, depicted his persevering activity by day, and his silent studying by night, in such a diverting fashion that she often had to laugh aloud. Soon, however, he grew melancholy as he told her how early he had lost father and mother, and had been thrown upon his own resources, save a paltry property inherited, without relations—for his father had been a grammarian called to Athens from Alexandria—he confronted the necessity of carving for himself a path through life, that stretched out before him like a tangled papyrus—or reed-thicket. Every hour of his existence was filled with work, and it is never easy to find patrons for a great ugly Goliath like himself. In the high schools of Alexandria, Athens and Cæsarea he had supported himself by teaching and the preparation of medicines from plants sought out by himself, dieting himself, meanwhile on water instead of wine, on bread and fruits instead of quails and patties, and nevertheless made many a friend of his own sex, but never one of the other. That would be hard to do with a face like his."

"Can I be the first then?" asked Paula, who felt a profound respect for the man who had worked his way up to the distinguished position which he had long since held, not only in Memphis, but among all the physicians of Egypt.

He nodded in the affirmative, and with a smile so rapturous that it seemed to dart sunshine into her very soul.

He noticed this immediately, lifted his beaker, drank to her,

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and exclaimed, with glowing cheeks: "What has come to others early, have I won later, but, to make up for it, my lady friend is an incomparable one."

"I hope, at least, that she does not prove herself to be quite so bad as you depicted her just now. If only a speedy end is not soon put to our compact!"

"How so?" cried the surgeon. "Every drop in these veins—"

"Would you be ready to shed in my behalf," interposed Paula, with a pathetic gesture, caught from the first tragedian on the Damascus stage. "But never mind; the question does not involve life and death, at most they will drive me away from this house and Memphis."

"You!" cried Philippus, indignantly. "Who durst attempt such a thing?"

"Those to whom I have been so extremely distant. You described the state of the case excellently just now. And if their will is carried out then, my dear, new friend, it will fare with us as with the learned Dionysius of Cyrene."

"Of Cyrene?"

"Yes, indeed. My father told me the story. When this Dionysius sent his son off to the High School at Athens, he sat himself down and began to write a book for him concerning all that a university student ought to do and forbear doing. He devoted himself to this labor with all zeal, and after four years were gone, just as he was writing down at the end of the last sheet of the roll, 'So then this book has come to a happy conclusion,' the young man whose studies this work was designed to guide, returned to Cyrene a finished scholar."

"And so we had closed our bond of friendship—"

"And made everything ready for our future alliance, just to be sundered very speedily."

Here Philippus rapped violently on the little table before his couch and exclaimed: "I'll know how to hinder that! But please confide in me: what has again come in between you and those people down there?"

"You will learn it time enough."

"And whoever thinks that they can turn you out of doors, and at the same time put an end to our friendship, may turn out to have made a mistake!" cried the surgeon, and his eyes began to sparkle angrily. "I have a right to put in a word about what goes on in this house, and we have not reached that point yet, indeed never shall. You are to leave them, to be sure! But only of your own free will, and holding a high head—"

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Here the door of the first sick-chamber was quickly opened, and the next minute Orion stood in the ante-room looking in cold astonishment at the pair who had shortly before finished their meal, and he said, moodily: "I see that I am intruding."

"Not at all," answered the surgeon; but the young man perceived that it would be out of taste and lacking in tact to give vent to his jealous annoyance, and answered, smilingly:

"Would that I had been allowed to make a third at this symposium!"

"We were perfectly well satisfied with one another," replied the surgeon.

"Blessedness would be assured to him who could believe as easily in all the doctrines of the Church as in that assertion," laughed Orion. "I am no marplot usually, honored friends; but this time I am truly sorry to have to be a disturber of the peace. The affair in question"—and now it was again admissible for him to drop the sportive tone which was in such ill-keeping with his mood—"the question concerns a matter of importance. In the first place, it concerns your freedman, my dear friend."

"Is Hiram back?" asked Paula, conscious at the same time that she turned pale.

"They have brought him in," answered Orion. "Father has had the judges summoned. Justice is fleet-footed among us. I am sorry for that man, but I can not hinder the law from taking its course. I must beg of you to be present at the hearing of the case, if you are summoned."

"They shall learn the whole truth," replied Paula, firmly and severely.

"Of course," answered Orion. Then he turned to the surgeon: "You, esteemed Æsculapius, I must request to leave my cousin and myself alone. I have some advice to give her that will assuredly be of advantage to her."

Philippus looked inquiringly at his friend, but she answered aloud and with decision: "I have no secret from you; what I am to hear may be said in this man's presence, too."

Hereupon Orion shrugged his shoulders and turned to go away; but ere he reached the threshold he whirled around and exclaimed excitedly and full of real solicitude:

"If you will not listen to me for your own sake, then do so, however ill-disposed you are toward me, because I entreat you not to deny me this favor. The question involves the life of one man and the happiness, the peace of mind of another. Do not say no. I am asking for nothing unreasonable, Philippus!

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Gratify my desire, and leave us alone for a few minutes, Philippus!"

Again the eyes of the surgeon searched those of the young lady, and this time she replied: "Go!" and her friend immediately withdrew.

Then Orion closed the door and cried, with eagerness:

"What have I done to you, Paula, that, since yesterday you have shunned me as though I were a leper, and seem bent upon effecting my ruin?"

"I am only thinking of interposing to save a trusty servant, nothing more," returned she, calmly.

"At the risk of ruining me?" answered Orion, bitterly.

"At that risk, if you can have the accursed effrontery to lay your own crime upon that honest man."

"You spied upon me last night!"

"Accident alone caused me to see you come forth from the *tablinum*—"

"I do not ask what carried you there at that late hour," interposed the young man, "for it revolts me to believe anything of you but the best, the highest. But you? What else have you received at my hands but friendship—nay, to dissemble and hide it here were folly—what but the attentions of a lover—"

"A lover?" interposed Paula, indignantly. "Dare you to say lover; you, who have pledged hand and heart to another; you, who—"

"Who told you that?" asked Orion, in a hollow tone.

"Your own mother."

"Ah, that is it then!" cried the young man, clasping his hands together convulsively. "Now I understand for the first time. I comprehend. But stop! If that is what provokes you to hatred, and leads you to persecute me, then you must love me, Paula; and then you high-souled, only being—"

So saying he stretched out his hand to her, but she repelled it, and exclaimed, in trembling accents:

"You are mistaken! I am not one of those feeble lambs against whom you have misused your gifts and graces, while they returned to kiss your hands. I am the daughter of Thomas, and should the bridegroom of another sue for my favor on the way to his wedding he will learn to his hurt that there are women who will repel his disgraceful overtures and know how to punish the insult offered. Be off to your judges! You false accuser, call my Hiram, but I call you—you the son of this house—the thief. We shall see whom they will believe!"

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"Me!" answered Orion, and his eyes began to flash no less indignantly and menacingly than hers. "Me, the son of the Mukaukas! Oh, that you were not a woman! I would force you to your knees, and compel you to sue for my forgiveness! How dare you to point the finger of scorn at a man whose record has hitherto been as pure and spotless as your white garment, just as if he were a villain of common mold? Yes, I did go into the *tablinum*. I cut the emerald off the tapestry, but it was done in wanton mood, and with the consciousness of my father's property being my own. Then I flung away the stone to please a strange fancy, a passing whim. Cursed be the hour when this was done, not for the deed itself, but for the consequences that may follow it through your mad hatred. Jealousy, petty, unworthy jealousy it is that has inspired it! And against whom is it directed?"

"Against no one, not even your betrothed Catharine," replied Paula, with forced tranquillity. "What are you to me, that in order to spare you a humiliation, I should imperil the life of the most honest of men? Let the matter rest as it stands; let the judges decide."

"No, they shall not!" burst forth Orion anew, "at least not in the way that you mean! Take heed, take heed of driving me to extremity! Still I behold in you the woman that I loved, still propose to do everything in my power, that all may turn out for the best for you—"

"For me? Then am I too destined to pay the penalty for your crime?"

"Did you hear any barking just now?"

"I heard the yelping of hounds."

"Well, then, the freedman has been brought in, the pack had followed out their trail successfully, come up with him, and were now led into the house and the neighborhood of the *tablinum*, and the dogs would not budge from the threshold, and the people afterward found there, at the right hand corner of the white marble threshold, the tracks of a man's foot in the dust. It was singularly shaped, and instead of five toes there were only three to be discovered. Your Hiram was brought, and he was found to have just as many toes as there were impressions on the marble—no more, no less. A stallion trod on him in your father's stable, and the surgeon had to amputate two of his toes. This was wormed out of the stammerer with great difficulty. On the other side of the threshold was a smaller foot-print, but little attention as the dogs paid to it, I noticed it, and was sure—as you need not to be informed—that it had been you who stood there. He who has

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no right to enter this house, penetrated last night into our *tablinum*, our treasure-chamber. Put yourself in the place of the judges! How heavily must such facts weigh in the balance, as opposed to the mere word of a young lady, concerning whom everybody knows that she and my mother are not upon good terms, and that with her all must bend to rescue her servant."

"Contemptible!" cried Paula. "But Hiram did not steal the stone, and you know perfectly who did. The emerald that he sold was my property, and these stones really look so precisely alike that the dealer himself—"

"Yes, yes! he could not distinguish them. There must be wicked demons taking part in all this, devilish, mischievous sprites! There might be a stagnation of the intellect, if life were not so full of wonders. You yourself are the greatest one! Did you commission the Syrian to sell that emerald in order to flee from this house with its proceeds? You are silent. Then I have hit the right mark. What can my father be to you? You do not love my mother, and their son—Paula, Paula, perhaps you do him injustice! You hate him; to injure him is your delight;"

"I grieve to pain either you or anybody else," answered the girl, "and your supposition is false. Your father refuses me the means for seeking mine—"

"And you wanted to procure money in order to prosecute a further search after one long since deceased. Even mother grants that you love truth, and she is right, hence if indeed you do not rejoice in my destruction, then listen, follow my advice and grant my request! I do not ask for any great thing."

"Say on then."

"Do you know what honor is to a man? Need I say that I am a lost, despised man if I am condemned by the judges of our own house on account of this act of brainless levity? It may cost my father his life if he learns that 'Guilty' has been pronounced over me, and I—I—what would become of me if this should happen? I can not contemplate—I—God—God save me from madness! But peace—peace. Time presses. How differently stands the case with your servant; he seems even now ready to take the crime upon himself; for no matter how they catechise him he maintains silence. Do you the same, and bring out into bold relief the relation in which you stood to the Syrian last night. The dogs, you know, found the print of his footsteps upon your stairs. Then give utterance to the conjecture that the faithful man has taken posses-

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sion of the emerald in order to gratify your desire that the quest for your father should continue. Can you make up your mind to offer this heavy sacrifice—oh, that I must ask it!—then I swear to you by all that I hold sacred, by yourself and my father's head, that in three days at latest I will have Hiram released from prison, unbeaten and untortured, and myself open up a way for him to flee whithersoever he chooses, or, if you like, to go in quest of your dead— Be silent, keep yourself calmly in the background; this is all that I ask, and I believe you do not doubt but that I will keep my word, do you?"

With deep emotion she had listened to him. She felt pity, great pity for him, as he stood there before her, tortured by inward pain, an evil-doer, who could not yet take in the situation, and who built upon the confidence that yesterday he had been justified in demanding of all the world. Like a magnificent tree struck by lightning, and that tottering now, with cloven trunk, must fall to the ground in the first storm that comes if the gardener does not prop it up, he stood before her, and of all things in the world, she would have loved to forget the injuries that he had done her, and grasp his hand affectionately and sympathetically; but her deeply wounded pride helped her to preserve the cool, reserved demeanor which so far she had been able to maintain.

Slowly and sedately she consented to be silent, so long as he kept his promise. Less for his sake than his father's she would make herself his accomplice; at the same time it was all over between them, and she would bless the hour which should separate her forever from him and his.

The last part of her discourse sounded unspeakably harsh and repellent, and she was compelled to make use of this tone to keep from betraying how deeply she felt his misfortune and the extinction of the sunshine in his being, which had once so delightfully warmed her own heart; but her words struck him as frigid, expressing unutterable contempt and the resentment of a foe. With difficulty he restrained himself from breaking out again into passionate invective. He was almost sorry that he had confided his secret to her, and asked a favor of her, instead of letting things run their course, and if the worst came to the worst, drag her down with himself to ruin. Rather would he lose honor and repose of mind than humble himself again before this pitiless, cold-hearted foe. At this minute he actually hated her, and he would have liked to be free to do battle with her to break her spirit, and see her conquered, pleading for mercy at his feet. With heaving chest, glowing cheeks and suppressed voice, he wound up with:

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"Separation from you is the best thing for us all. Be prepared; you will soon be summoned before the judges."

"Well," ran her answer, "I shall keep silence, but you must see to the Syrian's safety. I have your word."

"And so long as you remain true to yours I shall keep it; else," continued he, with lips trembling from excitement, "else war to the knife!"

"To the knife!" echoed she, with sparkling eyes. "But one thing more! I have proofs that the emerald which you traced to Hiram belonged to me. By all the saints, I have!"

"So much the better for you," answered he, in hollow tones. "Woe to us both if you force me to forget that you are a woman!" So saying, with rapid steps he left the hall.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH LOVE WEARS THE GUISE OF HATE.

With clinched fist and lowering looks Orion descended the stairs. His heart swelled nigh to bursting.

What had he done, what had he come to? That a woman should dare to meet him thus, a woman whom he had honored by his love, the fairest and noblest of her sex, but at the same time the haughtiest, most revengeful, most hateful! He had once read this saying: "Whoever has committed a base action that only one other person knows about carries the death-sentence of his tranquillity in the folds of his robe." He felt the weight of this sentence, and that one other initiated was Paula, the one whom of all others he would have wished to look up to him. Yesterday it would have seemed heaven upon earth to hold her in his arms and be permitted to call her his, now he felt only the one wish, to humble, to punish her. And that his hands were tied, that he had to sue for pardon from her like a condemned criminal! It was not to be taken in, was intolerable. But she should learn to know him! He had hitherto glided through life like a white swan; if these hours were wretched, if this woman made a vulture of him, was it not his own fault, was it hers?

Soon would it be proved which was the stronger of the twain. If a man would manage a woman he must chastise her, though the way to it should lead through crime and misery! That the physician had won her love he did not fear, for, with wonderful assurance, he felt that in spite of all the animosity which she had manifested toward him, her heart belonged to himself, and himself alone. "The gold piece of love," said he to him-

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self, "has two sides, fond longing and bitter hatred; now she shows me the latter, but how different may be the image and superscription on the coin if they let it ring; here, however, there is but one tone, and that is heard in her most insulting words."

At the family meal he had Paula excused, and himself took only a few mouthfuls, because the judges had long since assembled, and were waiting for him.

The right to pronounce sentence of death upon criminals had been vested of old in the ancestors of the Mukaukas, who had been mighty princes, and they had certainly used it under the Psamtikides, whose dominion came to a cruel ending through the Persian Cambyses. So the Mukaukas's palaces at Memphis and Lycopolis in Upper Egypt still displayed on their fronts representations of the asp, that adder whose bite causes the most speedy of deaths, and St. George the dragon-killer, as venerable symbols of this privilege; and afterward Justinian, and quite recently the Emperor Heraclius, had newly confirmed the head of the family in this ancient prerogative of pronouncing sentence of death upon the bondmen of his household and the inhabitants of the districts which he governed of his own sovereign will and power. The knight George had been placed between the old serpents in order to replace the heathenish symbol by a Christian one. Earlier the knight had borne the head of a sparrow-hawk, that is to say, of the god Horus, who, to avenge his father, overthrew the wicked Seth Typhon; yet, two hundred years before, the heathen crocodile-killer had been transformed into the Christian conqueror of the dragon.

After the conquest of the country the Arabians had forborne to alter the ancient laws and institutions, and so it had fared with those of the Mukaukas.

The court which was summoned to take cognizance of affairs among members of the household consisted of the higher officers of the governor's mansion. The Mukaukas himself acted as presiding judge, and his grown son was his natural substitute. During Orion's absence the chief of the exchequer, Nilus, a wise and discreet Egyptian, had frequently taken the place of his invalid master, but to-day Orion had been commissioned to take his place and preside over the court.

From the dining-room the governor's son hurried to his father's chamber, and asked him for his ring, as a token of the authority which he had transferred to him, and the Mukaukas willingly allowed it to be drawn from his finger, and impressed it upon the young man that unflinching severity was to be ex-

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ercised. Usually he was inclined to mildness, yet death was the penalty for house-breaking, and, in this case, no consideration was to be shown on account of the Arabian merchant.

Orion, mindful of his agreement with Paula, implored his father to allow him to act as his own judgment should dictate. The old Moslem was a just man, who, under some circumstances, would consent to a mild sentence, especially as the criminal was not really a member of their own household, but in the service of a relation.

The Mukaukas praised his son's moderation of mind. If his health were only a little better he would give himself the pleasure of attending the court's session, and seeing him, for the first time, discharge a grave duty worthy of his birth and station.

Orion kissed his father's hand fervently, and with a melancholy wave of the hand, for every commendatory word of that beloved parent touched him deeply, and made him feel poignant regret that he must enter upon his career as judge thus, recognizing as he did the gravity and sacredness of the office.

Tenderly disposed, absorbed in thought, and deliberating how best to save Hiram and keep Paula's name entirely out of the affair, he repaired to the court-room, and found before him the nurse Perpetua in lively conversation with the treasurer Nilus.

The old woman was beside herself. Through the clattering of the looms she had heard nothing of what was going on until a short time before; now she asseverated the innocence of the unhappy Hiram. The stone which he had sold was the property of her mistress, and thank God proof of this was not lacking; the setting of the emerald was safe in her mistress's trunk. She had been fortunate enough to be able to speak with her, but that she, the daughter of Thomas, should be summoned to court, like the child of any common citizen or slave, was a thing unheard of—shameful!

Here Orion harshly cut her short, and ordered the old *portier* to take her directly into the store-room next the *tablinum*, where the stuffs were kept destined for the use of the household, and there she was to be held in custody until further orders were given. The tone in which this command was given was so peremptory that even the nurse ventured no reply, and the chief of exchequer, too, silently obeyed his command to rejoin the other judges.

Astonished and disturbed, Nilus went back into the court-room. He had never before seen his master's son in that as-

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pect! During the nurse's communication the veins upon his youthfully smooth forehead had become knotted and swollen, and his nostrils had begun to quiver with a quick, convulsive movement, his sweet voice had become harsh and his eye had sparkled portentously.

Orion was alone now, and gnashed his teeth with rage. In spite of the promise given, Paula had betrayed him, and how pitiful was the womanly cunning with which she had done so! Before the judges, glorious! Before them she could afford to be silent now, quite composedly quiet, until the close of the session, after her nurse, her spokeswoman, had confided to Nilus, the deepest and sharpest of the whole college, the proofs which testified in her favor and against him. Unheard of, vile! A disgraceful, studiously trickish treason! But she was not at her goal yet; he was free to do as he chose, and parry that mean stroke by a counter thrust. How he was to proceed had become clear to him while the nurse was talking, but conscience, natural disposition and long habit held him back within the limits of the right, good and appropriate. Not only had he never before done anything low and mean, but he had never seen anybody else commit a base action with complacency, and the only means that he could take to nullify Paula's treachery was—he could not deny it—was original and bold, but equally abominable and disgraceful.

And yet he would not and durst not be beaten in this strife. Time was pressing, long deliberation was not possible here, and suddenly there came over him a fierce, wild thirst for battle, such a state of mind as possessed him on the day for racing in the circus, when he drove his own span of horses and outstripped all the rest.

Forward, then, forward, though the chariot be smashed, the horses killed and its wheels crushing his overthrown companions in the sand of the arena! Forward, only forward!

With a few rapid steps he gained the little room of the *portier*, a vigilant old man, who had held his office for forty years. He had before that been a locksmith, and now it was a part of his duty to make such little repairs as the simpler domestic utensils needed. As a boy Orion had been a pretty little fellow, attracting every heart, and was a favorite with this good man also, and had conceived a great fondness for staying in his shop, and learning from him how to ply his craft. Endowed with uncommon mechanical skill, he had been an apt pupil of the old man, and had progressed far enough to carve pretty little boxes, prayer-book covers and the like, embossing them with metal, which served for birthday gifts to

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his parents. In Egypt birthdays are celebrated with especial honors, such as feasts, seasoned by the giving and receiving of presents. Orion knew how to manage all tools, and now hurriedly selected such as he thought he would need. On the window-seat of the little shop stood a bouquet that he had yesterday arranged for Paula, and amid the distractions of that dreadful day forgotten to deliver. With this in his hand and the tools hidden in his bosom, he hurried upstairs.

"Forward, only forward!" cried he to himself, as he penetrated into Paula's chamber, drew the inner bolt, and throwing the flowers down, knelt before her trunk. Were he discovered, then he had gone into Paula's room to give her that bunch of flowers.

"And forward, only forward!" thought he continually, as he unscrewed the hinges on which the lid of the trunk moved. His hands trembled, his breath came and went quickly, but the work progressed nevertheless. This mode of proceeding was the right one, for the artistic lock on the chest could not be opened without spoiling it. Now he lifted up the lid, and, as though aided by friendly sprites, at his first dive into the trunk he brought forth the necklace with its empty setting. It hung to the curiously wrought ornament; to whack it loose and hide it in his bosom was the work of a second.

But now the loudest "forward" no longer availed. This was a theft whereby he had robbed of something her whom, if she had only consented, he would have been ready to overwhelm with all the wealth which had been so superabundantly bestowed upon himself by destiny. No, this—this—

Here a wonderful thought suddenly darted through his brain, a thought that forced a smile to his lips despite the frightful seriousness of the hour. It was put into action without delay, and thrusting his hand deep into a lower pocket, he brought forth a gem that he wore around his neck by a golden chain. This jewel, the masterpiece of a great Greek stonecutter of ancient heathen days, had been given to him by his best friend in Constantinople, in return for a span of four horses that had pleased him particularly, and in fact it possessed higher value than half a dozen noble steeds.

Like a person possessed, Orion followed the wild impulse which had seized him, rejoicing that he had at hand so costly an article to hang in the place of that wretched empty gold plate. This had been done by merely putting out his hand twice, but the screwing on of the hinges took more time, for his fingers trembled violently, and the nearer came the moment when he could make Paula feel his superior power, the

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quicker beat his pulses, and the harder it became for him to compose his spirit for calm deliberation.

After he had unbolted the door, like a thief again he had to peep out into the long passage fronting the guest-chambers, and this increased his excitement to fury against the world and fate, most especially against her who had forced him thus to degrade himself.

The charioteer had the reins and goad in his hand now. Forward, only forward!

As once before, when a boy, he chased down-stairs, bounding over three stairs at a time, and upon his meeting in the antechamber the Greek governess, Eudoxia, bringing her refractory little pupil, Maria, into the house, Orion threw to her the bunch of flowers that he had again picked up, and without heeding the languishing glance with which the elderly young lady accompanied her thanks, he hurried back into the gatekeeper's cell, and there speedily dispossessed himself of the good man's tools.

A few minutes afterward he entered the court-room. The treasurer, Nilus, pointed out to him the elevated seat belonging to his father as presiding officer, but a strong feeling of shyness held him back from the occupancy of this seat of honor, and with glowing face and brow so dark and lowering that those present gazed upon him affrighted and astonished, and with quick, energetic speech, he opened the session.

He hardly knew himself what he was saying, and heard his own speech with no more distinctness than though it had been the far-off roaring of the sea, but nevertheless he succeeded in making plain what had happened. He pointed out to the judges the stolen jewel and the recovered thief; he told how they had caught him, declared the freedman of Thomas's daughter to be the criminal, and challenged him to bring forward whatever he could in his justification; but the accused only stammered out painfully that he was innocent. To defend himself was not his affair, but his mistress could perhaps produce some proof in his favor.

Hereupon Orion shook the tangled curls off his forehead, threw his head back proudly, and said, turning to the judges:

"She is a noble lady, a member of our family; we keep her apart from this disagreeable affair, which is but seemly. Besides her nurse has made communications to Nilus that are perhaps fitted to save this unhappy man. We do not wish to withhold any evidence, but you, who are less familiar with the circumstances existing, must keep the following in mind to prevent being led astray: yon accused man is dear to her, be-

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cause, as the sole reminders left her of the old home, she is strongly attached to both him and Perpetua. Furthermore, it can not strike either yourselves or me with wonder, if a noble-minded woman like her ventures to take upon herself the guilt of another and place herself in a dubious light, in order to save a servant up to this time faithful and trusted. Her nurse is at hand; shall we cite her, or, Nilus, has she confided to you all that her mistress would say in defense of her freedman?"

"Perpetua did make me some authentic statements, and you were present, too, sir, if I mistake not," replied the treasurer; "but I can not repeat them so accurately as she did; and I should think, therefore, that we had better summon the woman before the bar."

"Call her in, then," ordered Orion, looking far away beyond the judges into vacant space.

Unapproachable he seemed, and sinister in mood.

After a long silence that was on all sides painful, the old woman appeared. Certain of her just cause, she approached in a self-confident manner, and, at first, looked askance upon poor Hiram, because he had kept silent so long, and forthwith told that Paula, in order to procure the money needful to prosecute inquiries after her father, had had a costly emerald taken out of a necklace of hers, and how suspicion had fallen upon her countryman through his having been commissioned to sell this.

The nurse's explanation seemed to dispose most of the judges favorably toward the accused; but Orion did not allow them time to interchange opinions, for Perpetua had hardly finished before Orion picked up the emerald, which lay on the table before him, and cried out excitedly, nay indignantly:

"And a stone, which even he who sold it, one of the greatest connoisseurs in jewels known, declared was the one abstracted from the tapestry and solitary of its kind, is suddenly to have found its counterpart through a miracle of nature, is it? Evil spirits do carry on their pranks still, I grant you; but hardly in this Christian house. You know the significance that nurses' tales bear in our language, and what that nurse there has retailed to us belongs to the most incredible of the species. 'You can make the Jew Apelles believe that,' said the Roman Horace;" and so saying, he turned to the jeweler, who sat on the witness bench, "but not his brother in the faith, Gamaliel, and still less I, who see through this tissue. The noble Thomas's daughter demeans herself enough to weave it with the help of yon skillful weaver, and to unroll it before us in order to misguide us judges and save her faithful

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servant from imprisonment, labor in the mines, or death. So stands the case. Am I mistaken, woman, or do you persist in your assertion?"

The nurse, who had hoped to find in Orion her mistress's advocate, had followed his discourse with waxing horror. From his eyes flashed sometimes mockery, then again violent resentment; but although her eyes had filled with tears at this unexpected assault, she maintained her presence of mind and assured him that now as ever she had done honor to truth. The setting of her mistress's emerald would prove that.

Hereupon Orion shrugged his shoulders, ordered the nurse to summon her mistress, whose appearance in person had now become indispensable, and called out to the treasurer:

"Go meet her, Nilus! A servant must bring the trunk here in order that it may be opened by its owner before our eyes, and ere any one else has touched its contents. I would not suit for this errand, for nobody in this Jacobitish house—hardly indeed one of yourselves—has found any favor in the eyes of the fair Melchite. To me, alas! she is especially inimical; and so I must commit to others any regulations that might lead to misunderstandings. Conduct her hither, Nilus, of course with all the respect due to a high-born damsel."

As soon as the envoy had withdrawn, Orion began to pace the court-room with hasty, disordered steps. Only once did he stand still before the judges and exclaim:

"But if the setting is found, how shall we explain the presence of the two jewels, each unique of its kind? It is enough to make one lose patience! A tender-hearted maiden to venture to mislead a grave court of justice to benefit—" herewith he stamped his foot indignantly and continued his silent walk.

"He is but a novice as yet," thought the judges, who noticed his great uneasiness, "else how could he let such a foolish attempt to whitewash a criminal disturb him so, and lose his temper about a thing of the sort?"

Finally Paula's appearance put an end to Orion's promenade. He received her with a formal bow, and invited her to have a seat. Then he requested Nilus to explain to her what had been done so far in the case, and what had induced her, in the opinion of himself and others, to claim the stolen emerald for her own. He would, as much as possible, commit her examination to others; for she knew best on what terms they stood. Before his entrance into the hall of justice she had had her explanation of the theft communicated to the treasurer, Nilus, through Perpetua; but for his part—and here he raised his voice—he would have thought it more becoming and cousin-

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ly if she had confided to him, Orion, her intentions in behalf of her freedman, for then it would have been possible to warn her. But to act thus and ignore him he could but consider as a new proof of her dislike, and she must blame herself for the consequences. Now the law must take its course with inexorable severity.

The angry flashing of his eyes betrayed to her what she had to expect from him, and that war was declared between them. She told herself that he was of opinion that she had broken the promise so recently given him. However, she had by no means commissioned Perpetua to meddle with this affair; no, she had rather desired her to leave the producing of proof to herself in case of extremity. Orion must believe that she had wronged him; but could he, on that account, so far forget himself as to verify his threat, ruin an innocent man in order to free himself from suspicion and brand her as a false witness?

His flaming eye, his disordered mien, his heaving chest, declared this plainly enough. Then let the battle begin. At this minute she would rather have died than have attempted to conciliate him by an apology. Like him her whole being was in ferment; and by and by she would have liked to throw herself at his feet and implore him to be at peace with her, to abstain from further deeds of recklessness. But she maintained her lofty dignity, and the look with which she met Orion's was no less passionate and menacing than his.

Like two young eagles, who with fluffed feathers stand opposite one another ready for the fray, with elevated wings and outstretched necks; she, assured of victory through the consciousness of her righteous cause, but much more fearful for him than herself; he, almost blind to his own danger, but like a gladiator who faces his deadly foe in the arena, much more intent upon destroying him than defending life and limb.

While the treasurer was laying off before her what she already knew, and repeating the suspicion that she had allowed herself to be betrayed into falsehood in order to save the life of her servant, who had probably committed the robbery for love of his lost master, she looked more frequently at Orion than the speaker. At last he mentioned the trunk brought with Paula from her chamber, and announced to her that the council was ready to hear and test everything that she had to bring forward in her defense.

Now Orion's excitement reached its climax. He felt how the blood vanished from his cheeks, and how confused became his thoughts. The judges, the accused, his enemy, all the environs of that vast court-room were, for him, enveloped with

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whirling greenish mists. What he saw seemed to him as if colored a bright emerald green. The hair, the faces, the forms of those present, all shimmered and glittered in greenish splendor; but when Paula advanced toward the trunk with firm and sure step, took a key from her pocket, handed it to the officer in charge, and then as her sole answer to Nilus's discourse, and as if this were too much, said, with cool condescension: "Open the trunk!" again he beheld her glossy brown hair, the fiery brilliance of her blue eyes, the white and red of her cheeks, the white robe that gracefully infolded her splendid figure, and her triumphant smile. How beautiful, how well worth winning was this woman! Soon would she be compelled to stoop before him; but this victory over her cost him all that was good in him, pure or worthy of his father. An inner voice kept repeating this to him, but it was drowned with the fierce forward shout of the charioteer. Yes, still push on till the goal is reached, on, over rubbish and stones, through blood and mire, until her proud neck bends, until conquered and broken in spirit she sues for mercy!

Now the lid of the trunk flew open; now Paula stooped; now she held her necklace out to the judges, catching it by the two ends, and displaying it at full length; and now—

What a woful, heart-rending shriek of despair! Even Orion himself could never, never have wished to hear the like again; now she cast her ornament upon the table, and with the ejaculation, "Shameful, shameful, infamous!" she fell backward, and caught fast hold of her faithful Perpetua; for her knees were trembling, and she felt herself to be in danger of falling to the ground.

Then Orion rushed forward to lend her support; but she thrust him back, at the same time withering him with a look so full of pain, scorn and deep contempt that he stood motionless before her, pressing his hand against the place where a heart should have been. And this game, which was to be so fraught with woe for two human beings, had it begun with a smile? This fool's play, in which a sentence of death lay concealed, to what a horrible issue might it lead?

Paula, meanwhile, had sunk upon a chair speechless, and he, too, looked down as though stupefied, until a peal of laughter rang forth from the row of spectators, and old Psamtik, the commander of the main guard, who had long been among the judges, exclaimed:

"Bless my life! but that is a costly stone! That is Cupid, the heathen God of Love, with his winged darling Psyche looking him sweetly in the face. Have you not read that fine

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romance of Apuleius, called the 'Golden Ass'? This little scene comes in there. Holy Lucas! How finely carved it is! The noble young lady has made a mistake in that necklace. Eh, Gamaliel? What place could be found there for that thing"—and so saying he pointed to the gem—"that green pigeon's egg?"

"None at all," answered the Jew. "The noble young lady—"

Here Orion imperatively commanded silence, and the treasurer Nilus now took the gem into his hand and examined it attentively on all sides. Then he, the grave, just man, stepped up to her, shrugged his shoulders regretfully, and asked her if she could find another necklace in the trunk with the setting of which she had spoken.

Then cold chills ran over her; for what had happened here was like a miracle. But no! With this stroke no higher powers had had aught to do. Orion believed that she had broken her promise to consider him and be silent, and this, this was his revenge. By what means he had accomplished his fell purpose, that was the riddle. What a stroke! It had gone home. But should she submit to it like a patient child? No, a thousand times no! And suddenly her old power of resistance returned to her; hatred steeled her weakened will, and as the imagination had placed him in the circus in the midst of the race-course, so it seated her at the chess-board; and it seemed to her as though she were contending with him for the victory, but not as with his father for flowers, small gifts, or the mere honor of winning, but for a very different stake—for death or life. She would give up everything to get the better of him; and yet—no, let come what would—not everything. Rather be beaten than accuse him of the theft, than betray what she had chanced to see in the *viridarium*. She had promised to be silent on that head, and to save the son from this disgrace would be her return to the father for his goodness. How handsome and grand had her fancy depicted Orion! She would not put this stain upon his spotless character, to blacken him in her own eyes and those of the world. Every other consideration must be hurled far, far away, in order to wrest the victory from him and save Hiram. Every weapon was right, and yet this one of treason must not, should not, be used against him! He must be made to feel that she was more noble-minded than himself; that in every situation of life she was true to her word. It was determined, and now she breathed regularly once more, her eye grew animated

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again, and yet it was long ere she found the right word wherewith to begin the struggle.

Orion saw how her soul was riled; he felt that she was rousing herself up to resistance, and would have liked to encourage her to strike the first blow. Not a word, as yet, of surprise or indignation, nor a syllable of reproach had crossed her lips. What was she meditating, for what was she preparing? The more surprising and dangerous her plan proved to be so much the better; the more courageously she defended herself, the further into the background retreated the painful thought that he had a woman for an opponent. Even heroes had been proud of victory over the Amazons!

At last, at last she rose up and approached Hiram. They had put him in the pillory, and as she encountered a pleading glance from his honest eyes her tongue was loosed, suddenly she became conscious that she had not only to defend herself, but perform a sacred duty; and after she had approached with a few hasty steps the table around which the judges were arranged in a semicircle, with her left hand resting upon its top and her right hand uplifted, she exclaimed:

"Sirs, you are the victims of a horrible deception, and for myself a trick of unparalleled meanness has been practiced to effect my ruin. Does that man in the pillory yonder look like a robber? A more honest and faithful servant has never been freed by his master, and the gratitude which Hiram owed to his master he has transferred to the daughter. Yes, for her sake he has left country, wife, and child, following poor orphaned me into a foreign land. However, this is nothing to you! And yet if you want to hear the truth, the whole unvarnished truth—"

"Speak!" exclaimed Orion; but although she did continue, she purposely ignored him and addressed herself to the judges and Nilus:

"Your head, the son of Mukaukas, knows that instead of one accused I might turn accuser if I would. But I scorn to do this out of love to his fa'her, and because I am higher-minded than he! He will understand me! So far as that emerald is concerned, the freedman Hiram, with his knife broke it out of its setting yesterday evening in my presence; but besides us, thank God, others saw it hanging to the chain to which it belonged. At noon to-day it was still in the place where, later in the day, the hand of a criminal has succeeded in affixing this gem. That I saw it just now for the first time I call God to witness. It is a costly thing. Only a rich man, the richest among you all, gives away such a treasure, for any

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purpose whatsoever—to destroy an enemy, let us say. Gamaliel," and so saying, she turned to the jeweler, "how highly, Gamaliel, do you value that onyx?"

The Israelite once more took the gem in hand, turned it hither and thither, and then said, with a smirk:

"Yes, fair lady, if my black, brooding hen should lay such a little egg I would feed her on nothing but Arsinoë cakes and fat Canopus oysters. The thing is worth a fortune; and I am no rich man, but at any moment I would pay two great talents for it, though I should have to borrow them."

These explanations did not fail to produce a strong effect upon the judges; but Orion cried out:

"Why, miracles multiply themselves this remarkable day! Generosity, that had become a mere sound, will come to life among us. A spendthrift demon makes a precious gem out a worthless bit of gold plate. May one ask who saw the pendant upon your chain?"

She fell into danger here, and came near betraying herself, as she answered with trembling voice:

"Apparently your emissary or yourself; for you, you alone have reason—"

Further than this she did not get, for he abruptly cut short her discourse:

"That is too much! Oh, that you were a man! I have seen how far your generosity extends! Hatred, too, the bitterest enmity—"

"They would have the right to destroy you utterly!" cried she, excited to the utmost. "And if I accuse you of the most heinous crime—"

"Then you will commit a crime against me, yourself, and this house!" cried he, threateningly. "Take care, girl! Can blindness go so far as to call upon me to confirm the tale that you have trumped up—"

"Oh, no, no; for that would be to expect something brave of you," interposed she, aloud. "I have witnesses of an entirely different sort: Maria, granddaughter of the Mukaukas George," and now her eye sought his, but he cried out:

"That child, whose heart is wrapped up in you, and who follows you like a pet dog!"

"And besides her, Catharine, the widow Susannah's daughter," added she, confident of victory and glowing with excitement. "She is no longer a child, but a grown girl, and you know it! But I"—and now she turned again to the judges—"I call upon you, gentlemen, to discharge worthily the duties

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of your office, and to allow justice to be done me by summoning the two witnesses before you and letting them be heard."

With difficulty preserving his composure, Orion answered: "It is for her grandparents to decide whether this tender child be exposed to the trial of testifying in court, especially as her evidence could not be impartial where so idolized a friend was concerned. Besides, her age must detract from the validity of her evidence; moreover, I greatly object to a child of this house becoming entangled in this wretched affair. On the other hand, it is the duty of the court to have the young lady Catharine summoned, and I myself volunteer to go for her."

Paula's attempt to interrupt him again signally failed. He waved her off, saying that later she would be patiently heard in the presence of the witnesses. The gem probably came from her father's estate.

Then again Paula was overcome with just wrath, and beside herself, cried out: "No, a thousand times no! An infamous scoundrel, one of your abettors—I repeat it—made his way into my room, and while I was attending to the sick burst the lock off my trunk or opened it with a false key!"

"That will show for itself," replied Orion, and his voice sounded confident as he gave orders to have the box set upon the table, and asked a member of the court, as a connoisseur, to give his judgment in the matter.

Paula knew this man very well. He was one of the most highly esteemed members of the household, the Mukaukas's chief mechanic, whose office it was to test and make perfect weights and measures, water-clocks and other instruments.

This skillful man immediately set about examining the lock, and found it in good order. It was constructed in the most peculiar manner, although the place of the curiously wrought key could not have been supplied by any pick-lock, and Paula had to admit that at noon the trunk was locked, and that the key had been hanging around her neck ever since.

Orion listened to his opinion with a shrug of the shoulders, and then before he set forth to summon Catharine, ordered Paula and her nurse to be shut up, apart, in adjoining rooms. In order to throw light upon this affair the order was that there should be no further communication between the two.

As soon as the door had been closed behind the women, he hurried into the garden, where he hoped to find Catharine.

The judges looked after him with mingled feelings. Here were enigmas hard of solution. To doubt the good intentions of their just lord's son, whom they esteemed as a richly endowed and high-minded young man, seemed to them unjustifia-

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ble. His conflict with Paula had touched them painfully, and each one asked himself how it happened that this favorite of womankind had not succeeded in awakening other feelings than those of hatred in one of the fairest of her sex. The great enmity which she manifested toward Orion injured her cause in the eyes of the judges, who knew only too well the bad terms on which she was with the Lady Nephoris. More than rash had it been in her to accuse the son of the Mukaukas of having broken open her trunk; only hatred could have impelled her to make such a charge, but there was something in her manner that gave surety for the credibility of her statements, and if Catharine could testify sure enough that she had seen the emerald hanging from the chain, then nothing was left but to begin the investigation from a new direction and look out for another house-breaker. But who could have flung away so precious an article as this gem, to take the place of a wretched nothing? It was not to be thought of, and the mechanic Ammonius was right in asserting that a woman full of hatred was capable of anything, even the incredible and unheard of. Meanwhile it had become perfectly dark, and a mild lovely evening had succeeded the glowing day.

The Mukaukas had not yet left his chamber, while his wife, with the widow Susannah and her daughter, little Maria, and her governess were taking the air and chatting in the open hall fronting upon the garden and the Nile. The ladies had thrown veils over their heads, as a protection against the mosquitoes that came hither in swarms, attracted by the torch-light, and also against the mist ascending from the river, and when Orion appeared they were helping themselves to sherbet that had just been handed in.

"What has happened?" called out his mother to him, in a tone of solicitude, for she concluded from his disordered hair and flushed cheeks that the session had been anything else than harmonious.

"Something unheard of," answered he. "Paula is fighting like a lioness for her father's freedman—"

"In order to mortify us and plunge us into difficulties," returned Nephoris.

"No, no, mother," replied Orion, excitedly. "But she is a determined woman, perfectly reckless where the carrying out of her will is concerned, and to this end she works with a prudence worthy of the greatest advocates whom I have ever heard plead a bad cause on the rostrum in the capital. Besides, her noble manner and divine beauty turn the heads of our poor domestic officers. And it is brave and noble in her to take up

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the cudgels thus for a servant; and yet it can not help her at all, for the proofs existing against her stammering favorite are simply overwhelming, and if her last pretext falls to the ground the thing is decided. She professes to have shown that child and you too, charming Catharine, a necklace."

"Shown," repeated the humming-bird. "She took it away from us, did she not, Maria?"

"We had just taken it without her permission," replied the little girl.

"And does she want our children to be cited before the court, in order to testify in her highness's favor?"

"To be sure," answered Orion. "But Maria's statement will go for nothing before the judges—"

"I tell you what," exclaimed his mother, "this child is in no case to be mixed up in this good-for-nothing business!"

"Because I would speak up for Paula!" cried Maria, jumping up passionately.

"Will you hold your tongue?" said her grandmother, sharply. "And as to Catharine," said the widow, "I have no idea of giving her up as a gazing-stock for all those gentlemen."

"Gentlemen!" mimicked the girl. "They are men, petty officers, and more of that sort. They can wait a long while for me!"

"Nevertheless, you must gratify their wish, proud rosebud," laughed Orion; "for, thank God, you are a child no longer, and it is the prerogative of a court of justice to summon before its bar, as a witness, every grown-up person. You need not mind, for you are under my protection. Do come! One must gain experience of life! No struggling will avail here. As for the rest, you need only say out what you have seen, and then, if she'll allow me, I'll lead you safe home to your mother, this arm being your support. You must, indeed, intrust your jewel to me to-day, Susannah, and the venerable witness shall then report to you how she has fared under my wing."

Catharine knew how to interpret the hidden meaning of these words, and was no little pleased to be permitted to stay alone with the handsome governor's son, the first man who had ever caused her little heart to beat quicker, and so she jumped up briskly; but Maria clung so to her arm and begged so urgently and obstinately to be taken with her and allowed to testify in Paula's favor that her governess and Lady Nephoris had great difficulty in holding her back so that the young pair could go off alone.

Both mothers looked after them with contented hearts, and the governor's wife whispered to the widow: "To-day before

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the court, and right soon, God willing, before the altar in church."

In order to reach the court-room one could either go through the house or walk around it. If one preferred the last way, then the garden must first be traversed, and of this Orion made choice. He had forcibly restrained himself in the presence of the ladies, in order to conceal from them the unrest of his spirit, and now he felt how the battle which he had begun, and from which he neither could nor would retreat now, was pushing him on and on, compelling him, too, to drag after him in the criminal course upon which he had started this young creature, who must become his wife. Yes, the die was cast.

When he had promised his mother to court Catharine, not the next day, but the day after that, he had hoped to convince her within the time of respite that the little girl was not the right wife for him, and now—what a mockery of fate!—now he saw himself compelled to do the opposite in every respect of what his inclinations prompted him to. The woman whom he loved, yes, still loved always, he was battling with like a deadly foe, and the girl whom he really cared nothing for, her he had to make love to. It was enough to craze one, yet it must be done, and with a fresh "Forward, forward!" he rushed into the performance of the reckless task of subjecting to his will the inexperienced being on his arm, so that she would be ready even to do wrong for his sake.

His heart beat wildly, yet there was no halting-place, no retreat possible; the thing was to come off victorious. "On then, only on!"

As soon as she had stepped into the shade from out the circle of light surrounding the lamps, glad that the darkness concealed his features, he caught the tiny right hand of the little girl at his side, pressed it in both his, and touched her fingertips with his lips.

"But Orion," said she, bashfully, yet unresistingly.

"I am only claiming my right, you sunshine of my soul!" answered he, caressingly. "If your heart beats as loud as mine does, then our mothers over there can hear it."

"It does beat," replied she, blissfully, letting her curly head drop to one side.

"But mine exceeds everything," replied he, sighing and laying her little hand upon his heart. He could confidently risk this, for its convulsive throbbing threatened to stifle him; but she exclaimed, joyfully:

"Yes, indeed, it fairly hammers—"

"They would be pleased to hear it over there," replied he,

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with a forced laugh. "I wonder if your mamma has not long since espied out what was in our hearts!"

"Of course she has," answered she, softly. "I have seldom seen her in such good spirits since your return."

"And you, little charmer?"

"I? Of course I was glad too; so were they all. And your parents?"

"No, no, Catharine! What you yourself felt about our meeting, that is what I would like to learn!"

"Oh, let that pass; how can one describe anything of that kind?"

"That should not be attempted, eh?" asked he, drawing her arm closer within his own. He must win her, and his poetic power of imagination helped him to depict, with glowing colors, a passion that he had never felt. Sweet words of love were poured into her ear, and she believed them only too gladly. At his solicitation she sat down trustfully beside him on a wooden bench in the old avenue that led to the north side of the house.

Many of the shrubs there were flowering, and their blossoms emitted perfume sweet to oppressiveness. The moonlight forced its way through the thick crowns of the sycamores, and shimmering streaks and circles of light sported in the foliage, on the trunks and upon the dark ground.

The atmosphere was still sultry and heavy, the heat of the day being still retained by the leaves overhead. And in this walk he called her, for the first time, his only beloved, inthralling her heart into a sweet bondage. Each one of his glowing words thrilling with the wild and painful excitement torturing his soul, had the appearance of emanating from a sincere and deeply smitten heart.

The perfume of the flowers further intoxicated her young and guileless heart, and willingly she allowed him to kiss her lips. Greatly blessed, she here felt the first thrill of young, reciprocal love.

She could have spent a life-time thus, in company with one so beloved, but, after a few minutes, eager to put an end to a scene, the tenderness of which began to be rather too much for him, he exclaimed, vehemently, in a loud tone:

"Oh, this devilish, accursed trial! But this is the fate of man. Duty calls, and he must back to earth from the very midst of the joys of paradise. Your arm, you, mine own and my all!"

And Catharine listened to him, bewildered and infatuated by the unheard-of good fortune that had befallen her; she allowed

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herself to be drawn on by him, and hearkened breathlessly as he went on thus:

"After such rapture as this to have to turn to the meanest of all pursuits! And how repugnant to feeling, how hateful beyond measure is the cause to be tried! How gladly would I be a friend and true protector to Paula instead of an adversary!"

At these words he felt the young girl's left hand tremble, as it rested on his arm, and further, ever further it drove him in his career of crime. Catharine herself indicated the means by which he might attain his end, and while he continud to inflame her jealousy, while he praised Paula's grace and dignity, he made the excuse to himself that as a promised bridegroom he was justified in forcing his betrothed to preserve for him honor and happiness.

Nevertheless, at each flattering word, he had a feeling as though he were degrading himself, and committing a new wrong against Paula. It was only too easy to sound her praise; and yet as he did so with growing animation, she tapped him on the arm, and said with vexation, half playful, half serious: "Oh, this goddess! Am I your beloved, or is she? You ought not to make me jealous! Do you hear?"

"Little blockhead!" replied he, gayly, and then continued soothingly: "She is like the cool moon, but you are the bright, genial sun. Yes, Paula! We'll hand her over to a denizen of Mount Olympus, to an archangel; but for me, I praise the frolicsome little maiden that is to go through life with me enjoying all its sweets!"

"That will we!" exulted she, and saw the horizon of her future radiant in dazzling sunshine.

"Good heavens!" broke in he, as if surprised. "See yonder shines already the light from that wretched court-room. Oh, love, love! Enchanted by her, we have forgotten the object of our walk. Tell me, my darling, do you know exactly how the necklace looked with which you and Maria were playing this morning?"

"It was very finely wrought, only that in the middle there was an ugly, bent-up piece of gold plate."

"A pretty connoisseur you! You have overlooked the beautifully carved gem that was in that unsightly setting."

"Assuredly not!"

"Oh, but you did, though, little wiseacre!"

"No, dearest!" and as she uttered this word, she opened her eyes roguishly, as though she had succeeded in a bold venture. "What gems are I know right well. My father left a

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large collection of them behind him, and mother says that, according to his will, they will one day belong to my husband."

"So I can set you, my precious jewel, in a circlet of pure gems."

"No, no," cried she, merrily. "Only give me a setting hereafter; for I am such a flighty little thing, but let it be nothing, nothing but your heart!"

"That piece of goldsmith's work is already done! But in all seriousness, child, what hung from Paula's necklace was a gem, and you, little connoisseur, accidentally saw it only from behind. It has a back exactly as you describe it, a plain case of gold plate."

"But Orion!"

"If you love me, sweetheart, then contradict me no further. Hereafter I will always ask you for your opinion, yet in this case your error might plunge me into sore difficulties, and force me to give up to Paula and make her my ally. Here we are! But let us stay one minute more! And now, once more the gem! You see—we can both err, I as well as you, but I verily believe myself to be in the right; and if you, this time, make a different statement from me, then I shall stand before the judges as a liar. We are now betrothed and one, entirely one, and what injures or exalts one, at the same time elevates or degrades the other. If you who love me, and concerning whom the people already whisper that you will soon be mistress in the governor's palace, make a statement different from mine, they will surely believe it. You see, you are all goodness, but besides you are too pure and young to understand every claim of that almighty love which bears and endures all things. If you do not cheerfully yield to me in this case, then most assuredly you do not love me as you should. And what great thing is asked of you? I put the question to you, and you say nothing more before the court, but that this morning you saw Paula's necklace, and that a gem was attached to it, a gem with a carving upon it of Cupid and Psyche."

"Am I to testify that in presence of all those men?" asked Catharine, reflectively.

"That you must, sweet angel!" cried Orion, tenderly. "Do you think it pretty for a betrothed bride to refuse the first request her lover makes of her, reflectively, dogmatically? No, no; if there is even a spark of love for me glimmering in your little heart, you would not see me forced to implore Paula to be gracious to me—"

"But what is all this talk about? What great difference can it make whether a gem or a simple gold plate—"

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"All that will be fully explained to you hereafter," answered he, eagerly.

"Do so now, please."

"That can not be; we have already put the patience of the court to too severe a test; not a minute is to be lost!"

"Well, now, but I shall die of mortification and shame if I make a statement before the judges—"

"Which is accurate, and whereby you can prove your love to me," interposed he, persuasively.

"How dreadful this is!" she cried out in distress. "Then at least tie my veil close over my face. All those bearded men—"

"Like the ostrich," laughed Orion, doing as she desired. "If you actually entertain an opinion different from that of your—how did you call him just now? Say it once more!"

"Your betrothed!" said she, with deep feeling and modesty. Orion helped to put her veil double over her face, and she did not turn from him when he whispered in her ear:

"Let us see how a kiss goes through such mumming! Come now; in a few minutes all will be over!"

So saying, he hurried her into the anteroom to the hall of justice.

She had, indeed, many a time sought to save herself from a scold by little subterfuges, but never yet gravely spoken falsehood; and now her whole being revolted against the idea of saying anything positively untrue. But could that be bad which had been asked of her by Orion, the noblest of men, the idol of the whole city, and in so urgent a manner too? Did not love impose upon her—he had been of this opinion—the duty of doing whatever could protect him from hurt or wrong? It would not appear perfectly fair to her, but perhaps she did not quite comprehend the whole case, because she was so young and inexperienced. It distressed her also that her beloved would have to form an alliance with Paula if she acted contrary to his will. She was not at all lacking in self-esteem, and said to herself that she need not stand back before any girl in Memphis; she only acknowledged the tall, proud, and beautiful Damascene as her superior, and could not forget how, day before yesterday, when Orion and Paula had been walking up and down in the garden, the governor of Memphis had exclaimed: "What a magnificently matched pair!" She had often thought that no fairer, nobler, lovelier creature existed on earth than the daughter of Thomas, and longed to obtain from her a friendly word or look. But ever since that remark of the Mukaukas there had sprung up in her heart a bitter feel-

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ing against Paula, which had been fostered by many causes since. She always treated her like a child, not like a grown-up young woman as she was. Why had she been inquiring after her betrothed this morning—for so she had a right to entitle him now—and keeping him away from her? And how had it happened that Orion, while confessing his love for herself, had spoken so more than warmly, so enthusiastically of her! No, she must be on her guard against the Damascene, and if some congratulated her on the good fortune that had befallen her, Paula at least did not rejoice in it; for that she did not look upon her beloved with indifference Catharine felt and knew. She had no enemy in the world but Paula; she was one, and from her her love had everything to fear; and suddenly she asked herself if the gold plate that she had seen had not been a gem. Had she examined the necklace attentively even for an instant? And should she have seen more sharply than those wondrously beautiful eyes of Orion?

He was right of course, right as always!

Most carved stones had an oval shape, and oval had been the thing about which she was to give evidence. It did not seem like Orion to ask her to say what was false. At all events it was the duty of his betrothed to guard his reputation and prevent his forming an alliance with that false siren. She knew what she had to say, and already felt like loosening her veil a little in order to look Paula straight in the eyes when Orion returned to lead her into the hall of justice.

To his joy, yes, almost to his astonishment, she asserted confidently that at noon a gem had depended from Paula's necklace, and when they showed her the onyx, and asked if she remembered having seen it, she calmly replied:

"That may or may not be the one. I only noticed its oval-shaped gold back; as for the rest, this young lady only left her jewel in my hands for a short while."

When the treasurer Nilus then invited her to scrutinize the representation of Cupid and Psyche, in order to quicken her recollection, she remarked, evasively:

"I do not like such heathenish images; we Jacobite girls wear a different sort of ornament."

Hereupon Paula rose to her feet, stepped up to her with a look full of stern reproof, and now little Catharine was delighted that she had thought of hiding behind the double veil. But the deep abasement into which she fell under the Damascene's eye lasted only for a short while; for when Paula said to her reproachfully: "You allude to your confession of faith. Like mine, it requires us to respect truth. Consider what depends

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upon your statement, I beseech you, child!" the diminutive woman turned upon her adversary and exclaimed, with passionate heat:

"I am no longer a child, not even to you; and before I speak I remember what I have been taught." Then she threw her head back defiantly and repeated, positively: "This onyx was hanging from the chain."

"How can you say such a thing, you naughty little minx?" said the nurse to her face, no longer mistress of herself; but Catharine started and looked as if an adder had stung her, and looked around to see who had dared to insult her so cruelly and boldly. Helpless and well-nigh weeping, she looked around for protection, and had not to wait long for an avenger, for Orion immediately committed Perpetua to prison on account of her false statement; but Paula, because she had not sworn, and only told an incredible tale out of a good motive, was allowed to go free and had her trunk restored to her room.

Once more she advanced and stood before the bar. Loosening the onyx from the chain she threw it to the Jew Gamaliel, who picked it up, and said:

"I make a present of it to you, man! Perhaps the villain who hung it upon my chain may buy it back from you. This was given to my grandmother by the Emperor Theodosius, and rather than have it defiled again by contact with the gift of such a wretch I shall throw it into the Nile. I am not angry with you, poor, cheated judges, but I pity you! My Hiram" —and here she pointed to the freedman—"is an honest man, of whom I shall think with gratitude to the day of my death; but this unjust son of the justest of fathers—"

While she thus spoke she looked Orion straight in the face; but here the young man interrupted her with a loud: "Enough."

Now she sought to collect her faculties, and said:

"I shall do your will; for your conscience will repeat to you a hundred times what I suppress; and now one word with you." So saying, she drew nearer to him and whispered: "I have so controlled myself as to leave unused against you the sharpest weapon that I possessed out of deference to a promise given. If you are not the meanest of the mean now remember yours and save Hiram."

A mute nod was his reply; but once more she paused upon the threshold and called out to Catharine:

"As for you, child, for such you are, the son of the Mukaukas will reward you by unspeakable sorrows for the service that you have rendered him!"

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Herewith she left the hall, mounted the steps with tottering knees, and as she again tarried by the couch of the poor lunatic, a gracious God sent her the relief of tears.

Her friend saw her weep, and allowed her to weep on undisturbed until she called him to her and confided to him all that had befallen her on this momentous day.

Orion and Catharine had lost their gay spirits and walked back through the corridor slowly and seriously. When, on the way, she urged him to explain to her why he had misled her into giving such evidence, he put her off until the next day. They found her mother alone; for the Lady Nephoris had been summoned to her suffering husband and had taken little Maria with her. After he had paid his respects to the widow and escorted her to her carriage, he returned to the hall of justice.

There he summed up the evidence before the court, and brought into full prominence the amount of proof against the freedman. After this sentence was pronounced. It condemned the trusty Hiram to death—the only dissentient voice being that of the treasurer Nilus.

Orion ordered the execution of the sentence to be postponed, and did not return to the house, but had the wildest steed in his stables saddled, and galloped all alone into the desert.

He had conquered; but it seemed to him as if he had been bemired in the race and must be suffocated by the mud.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOOR SHUTS UPON THE PAST.

WHAT the physician had heard, through Paula, of the proceedings of the past day—Orion's deportment and the issue of the council—angered him excessively, and impatiently he consented to the maiden's determination to forsake immediately this cursed robber's den, this house of ill-will, of weak-minded justices and false witnesses.

There was no chance for a quiet conversation between them, for in the sick-chamber Philippus soon had his hands full.

The Masdakite Hassan, who had up to this time been lying there unconscious, had meanwhile been aroused from his stupor in consequence of a new lotion, and was vociferously calling for his master. As the latter did not come, and they told him could not be expected before the next day, the giant straightened himself amid his pillows, rested his mighty arms, stiffly stretched out behind him, upon the bedstead, looked wildly hither and thither, and shook his big head, which had

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been shorn of its locks, like a roused lion. At the same time he applied abusive epithets to the physician in a deep, resonant bass voice, using, however, his mother tongue, which none of those present understood; and while Philippus sought fearlessly to renew the bandage upon his severe wound, Hassan suddenly loosened his hold upon the bedstead, flung his arms about the surgeon's body, and like a mad man, foaming at the mouth, sought to drag him down. Roaring like a wild beast he tugged at his adversary. Philippus, however, did not lose his presence of mind for an instant, but directed the men to fetch two stout slaves.

She hurried off, and Paula now became a witness to a frightful contest, for the doctor held the giant's fists in a firm grip, having removed his hands from his hips with a force that might have been predicated of the large, able-bodied man, but hardly of the habitually bent over student; then forcing open Hassan's fingers, he pressed him back upon the pillow, planting his knees upon his brazen couch, and so mastering him that the wounded man could not rise up again. And yet the Masdakite exerted all his force to free himself from his adversary, who was even stronger than himself, for loss of blood and fever had weakened him.

Paula beheld, tremblingly, this wrestling match of reflective force against the brutish strength of a raging giant, with a loudly beating heart. She could not help her friend, yet from the head of the bed she followed each of his movements, and was forced to admire his manly beauty as he held in subjection the powerful man before whom her sick uncle had shuddered in cowardly terror; for his eyes flashed in fiery splendor, and the insignificant lower part of his face was lengthened by the frightful exertion which he had imposed upon himself and brought it into harmony with the high forehead and the rest of his countenance. Her soul trembled for him, and she seemed to recognize something heroic and grand in him whom she had hitherto credited with nothing but superior intelligence.

For minutes the contest lasted, when Philippus felt the arm of the Persian relaxing its grasp, and now he called to Paula to hand him a handkerchief, a rope, or something wherewith to bind the maniac.

She hurried off into the next room, and with full presence of mind picked up her kerchief, tore the silk sash off her dress, ran back with them both to the scene of conflict, and, with the courage of a man, helped the surgeon to tie down the hands of the raving patient. She understood every exclamation, every hint of her friend; and when the slaves, who had been sum-

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moned by the nurse, entered the sick-room they found Hassan's hands strapped firmly together, and had only to hinder his jumping from side to side.

Now Philippus, panting, indicated to the slaves how they should deport themselves, and as he then began to fumble in the medicine chest and Paula noticed that his purplish, swollen fingers shook, she took out the bottle at which he was aiming, mixed a draught according to his prescription, and shrunk not from pouring it down between the teeth of the refractory patient, which had to be opened by force.

The soothing potion composed the sick man in a few minutes, and soon, with the aid of the experienced nurse, the surgeon was enabled to wash and rebandage the wound.

Meanwhile the crazy girl had been aroused by the noise made by the Persian, and anxiously inquired if the dog, that bad dog, were there. But she speedily allowed herself to be quieted by Paula, and answered the questions she put to her so rationally and tranquilly that her nurse had the doctor called, and he felt justified in confirming Paula's hope that a favorable change had taken place in the mental condition of the deranged girl. What she said sounded plaintive and sweet; and when Paula remarked this the doctor observed:

"In times of sickness one learns to know people. The wild girl, who, probably with murderous intent, fell upon the son of this house, now shows her genuinely gentle nature. As to yon fellow there he is a man of power, and an honest fellow into the bargain. I'll pledge you my word for it!"

"What gives you this confidence?"

"Why, even when delirious he did not once scratch or bite, and always defended himself fairly and squarely. My thanks now for your help; had you not flung that noose around his hands the issue of the matter might have been a very different one."

"No, indeed!" answered Paula, decidedly. "How strong you are, Philippus! One might be afraid of you."

"You?" laughed the doctor. "You are rather in a condition to dismiss fear seeing that your protector is no weakling! Whew! A little rest would be grateful now!"

Hereupon she handed him her own handkerchief, and while he thankfully used it for wiping his brow, and with difficulty restrained his desire to press it to his lips, he exclaimed, cheerfully:

"With such an aid all must go well. There is no merit in being strong. Anybody can be that who comes into the world with sound health and firm muscles, who exercises his limbs

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dutifully, as I used to do as a boy and youth, and does not ruin his paternal inheritance by a dissipated life. I tell you what, though, I felt the touch of the wrestler in those hands; but there is excellent wine in the hall; two or three glasses of it would do me good."

So saying, the two repaired to the next room, where most of the lamps had been already extinguished.

Paula poured out the juice of the grape for him, and he emptied the glass, taking long draughts. Meanwhile, after pledging her health, he was not allowed to sip his second glass, for hardly had he put it to his lips before a noise was heard in the Masdakite's chamber, and Nephoris appeared.

The Mukaukas's attentive wife had not budged from her husband's couch; no, not even the Persian's bellowing had induced her to leave her post; but after she had learned through the slaves of what was going on up there, and that Paula was still in attendance upon the sick man along with the doctor, just as soon as her husband could dispense with her services she had gone up to the guest-chambers, to speak to Philippus and get him to remind the girl of what propriety required, and also to inquire about those queer noises, with which her house seemed filled, although at this hour usually as still as death. They issued from the sick-rooms. Orion, was just returning with the treasurer Nilus, who had been summoned to his young master, although night was verging toward morning. But to the governor's wife everything seemed portentous on this dreadful day, which, by the way, was marked on the calendar as an unlucky one, and thus, attended by her husband's night-watcher, and holding in her hand a little reliquary, to which she ascribed power to exorcise evil spirits, she mounted the stairs.

Quickly and lightly she stepped into the sick-room, and arrived there, began in the first place to carry the nurse through a course of close questioning, in the cross, irritated tone of one roused from her slumbers. Then she penetrated into the hall, where Philippus had just pledged his friend in a second glass, Paula standing before him with ill-arranged hair and ungirdled robe. This was all contrary to custom, and what should not be suffered in her house, and so she peremptorily ordered her husband's niece to retire. After all that had been overlooked in her to-day—no, yesterday, it would be much more becoming in her, in the privacy of her own room to give herself to meditation and prayer to her Saviour for the exorcism of the lying spirits that possessed her and for pardon that to

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be playing sick-nurse here, and carrying on a carousal with a young man, that, the nun had just told her, began at noon.

Paula silently listened to her, but more than once the color in her face changed; but when Nephoris finally pointed her the way to the door with her finger, she summoned to her aid all that cool pride which was at her command when assailed by unworthy aspersions, and said:

"Your meaning is easy to decipher. I would not condescend to reply if you were not the wife of the man whom I rejoiced to call my host and protector before you prejudiced him against me, and who, moreover, is my kinsman. As you always do, you now suspect me unjustly. In closing against me the door of this sacred spot, consecrated to the use of the sick, at the same time you drive me out of your house, which you, and with you your son—it must be said once for all—without that have made into a hell for me."

"I—I—and with me— No, that is—that"—interposed the matron, gasping for breath, pressing both hands against her heaving chest, and her sallow countenance becoming suffused with glowing red, while lightning flashed from her eyes—"that is—a thousand times too much—a thousand times, do you hear? And I—I to condescend to answer her again! We picked her up out of the street, and treated her like a daughter, expended absurd amounts of money upon her, and now—"

These words had been addressed to the doctor rather than the girl herself, but Paula accepted her challenge, and replied, in a tone expressive of deep contempt:

"And now I declare to you solemnly, as a young woman of age, free to manage my own affairs, that early to-morrow morning, with all that is mine, I shall quit this house, though it be as a beggar, a house where I have been shamefully insulted, myself and my faithful servant falsely condemned, and he about to be cruelly murdered."

"And where they have been much too indulgent to you, in sparing you from the fate of the robber, who you smuggled in among us. In order to save a house-breaker—such a thing was never heard of—you have dared to accuse your benefactor's son of being an unjust judge—"

"He is that very thing!" cried Paula, whose spirit was roused. "And more than that! The child that you yourself selected for his wife has been misled by him into giving false witness. And more, much more could I tell you did I not respect the mother in you, and did not your husband deserve that I should spare him."

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"Spare, spare!" repeated Nephoris, scornfully. "You spare us! The accused dispenses grace and spares, spares his judge! But you shall be forced, yes, forced, to speak. And what you, base slanderer, have repeated from the lips of that false witness—"

"It is your own grandchild," interposed the doctor, "who must confirm it, noble lady, before the whole world, if you do not compose yourself."

Thereupon Nephoris convulsively laughed and, beside herself with passion, continued:

"So that is the way matters stand, do they? The hallowed sick-chamber you turn into the temple of Bacchus, of Venus; and not satisfied with this ruthless desecration, you have leagued yourselves together to plunge an honorable house into misery and disgrace!" Then leaning her left hand, which held the reliquary, upon her hip, she ejaculated, vehemently: "Then you shall have your way. Go wherever you choose, you ungrateful, bad thing! If I find you in the palace at noon tomorrow I'll have you put into the street by the police; for you —this poor, tortured heart of mine shall vent its feelings for once—you, you, you are repulsive to me! I hate you! Your very existence vexes me and brings misfortune upon me, and us all, and besides—besides that I hold dear the emeralds that we have—"

With this most severe speech, which she had given utterance to despite the better feelings of her nature, her soul seemed to have rid itself of a hundred pound weight, for she drew a deep breath, and turned to the physician in a manner much more gentle and considerate than before, and said:

"As regards you, Philippus, my husband has notified you of the offer we make you, and you know George's open hand. Perhaps you may think of a better one, and will look into—"

"I?" interposed the physician, with a lofty smile. "Do you really know me so ill, Lady Nephoris? Your husband, I grant, is cherished by me, and if he needs me, he need only send after me. Unsummoned, I shall never more cross this threshold, where law is trampled under foot, and defenseless innocence vilified and thrown into despair. Yes, you may well look at me in astonishment! Your son has polluted the judgment seat of his fathers, and the blood of the innocent Hiram rests upon his head; but you just go on loving your emeralds. Paula will not touch them; she is too high-minded to name to you him from whom you would do well to lock them up in the depths of your lowest cellar! What I have just heard from your own lips sunders every tie that time had linked between

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us. I do not want any estate, no specious compliments, no gift of body or mind from my friends, or shall I say from my near acquaintances; but one common soil we must have, that of a right intention. This did not come with you into the world, or else you lost it, and from this moment I will and must be a stranger to you and never want to see you again, save with your husband, when he asks for me."

These last words had such a measured, irrevocable sound that they terrified Nephoris and deprived her of her self-possession. She had been treated as a vile person deserving of contempt by that man whose station she looked down upon, but whom she had always esteemed as the most upright and purest of mankind, the man whom her husband could not do without, because he could bring him some alleviation to his suffering, and restrain him from excessive use of narcotics. Far and near he was the only doctor of any note. This hateful Damascene threatened also to deprive her of this useful helper, who had saved the life of little Maria and many of her servants, and she who felt firmly convinced that no one could excel her as a devoted wife and mother, now saw herself contemned as a wretch to be avoided by a good man.

This was too much, and tortured by indignation, vexation and genuine distress, her eyes were moistened with tears as she thus lamented:

"What is the meaning of all this? You who know me and have been a witness to my management, turn your back upon me in my own house and point at me the finger of scorn! Have I not always been a true wife, who has nursed her husband for years, not forsaken his sick bed-and thought of nothing but lessening his sufferings? I have shut myself up like a nun, from a sense of duty and wifely devotion, while other women, with fewer temptations, give themselves up to pleasure and parade. And where are slaves more abundantly provided for and more frequently set free than in our house? Where is the beggar so sure of alms as at our home, which I maintain solely in the interests of piety? And now for the sake of this ungrateful, unloving niece, am I suddenly to be considered of no account, unfit to be shone upon by the light of the sun, and a good man like yourself renounces friendship with me because, because—how did you call it just now?—because the spirit is lacking, or whatever you called the thing that one must have in order to—"

"It is called a good disposition," interposed the physician, who felt sorry for the troubled woman whom he knew in fact to possess many good qualities. "Is that quality a thing quite

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new to you, Lady Nephoris? It is born with us, but a strong will can exalt a disposition innately less noble, while a weak one can injure one naturally good, and, on the judgment-day, if I am not greatly mistaken, deeds will not be taken into calculation, but just the intention. It ill beseems me to find fault with you, but it is allowable for me to pity you, for I perceive in you that sickness of soul which is parallel to a cancer on the body—"

"And this too!" exclaimed Nephoris.

"This sickness," continued the doctor, nothing daunted, "hatred, I mean, such a pious Christian as yourself ought to know how to guard against. Like a thief in the night it has penetrated to your heart, has eaten it away, has corrupted your blood, and misled you to act toward an orphan hardly bestridden by calamity like the person who throws stones and arrows in the path of the blind that he may stumble and fall. If you care a little for my opinion, as it seems, then beg Paula's pardon ere she forsakes your house for the hatred with which you have pursued her for years, and for the unheard-of insults which you have just heaped upon her, in addition to your other injuries, making an accusation which you did not believe in yourself."

Hereupon Paula turned the gaze upon Nephoris, with which she had been intently following the doctor during his discourse, and loosened her clasped hands that lay folded in her lap, ready to offer her right hand to her uncle's wife, if she were willing, although her resolve to quit the governor's mansion was not a whit shaken.

Meanwhile a sore conflict was raging in the soul of the governor's wife. She felt that she had often acted unkindly toward Paula; that a painful mystery still hung over the emerald theft she had reluctantly admitted to herself before her visit to the sick-room. She knew that she would be rendering her husband a great service if she could persuade his niece to remain with them, and the doctor she herself would be only too glad to retain; but how deeply had she and her son been humiliated just now by this haughty creature! Should she humble herself in the presence of one so much younger than herself, and offer her her hand; should she— Now was heard the silver basin, into which her husband cast a ball when he wanted her. His pale, suffering countenance rose up before her mind's eye; she heard him ask after his partner at draughts, she saw his melancholy, reproachful look when he should learn on the morrow that she, Nephoris, had driven her niece, the noble Thomas's daughter, out of their house, and

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now obeying a sudden impulse, she drew near to Paula, holding the reliquary in her left hand, and offering the other to shake hands with her, and said, softly:

"Only shake hands, girl! I ought to have acted differently toward you many a time; but why did you never make the slightest attempt to win my love? God is my witness that in the beginning I would gladly have treated you as my own daughter, but you— Never mind, we'll drop that! I am sorry now ever to have hurt your feelings."

The first words had hardly dropped from her lips ere Paula laid her hand in that of the matron. Her own was cold like marble, that of her aunt hot and moist, and it was as though their hands felt the same repulsion as their hearts, for both ladies were conscious of it, and let them drop after they had been clasped only a brief instant. As Paula withdrew hers, she maintained a becoming deportment better than the older lady, and said in a quiet tone, but with glowing cheeks:

"Then we'll try to part without mutual ill-will, and I thank you for rendering this possible for me. Early in the morning I trust that I shall be allowed to depart in peace by the uncle who is dear to me and little Maria."

"But you have no longer any need to go; on the contrary, I beseech you to stay," eagerly interposed the governor's wife. "George will not hear of your departure; you know how much you are to him."

"He has often been like a father to me," answered Paula, tears beginning to glisten in her eyes likewise. "Therefore I should gladly have tarried to the end. Nevertheless, I am positively going."

"And what if your uncle should join his entreaties to mine?"

"It would be in vain."

Once more Nephoris seized the young girl's hand, and tried with unaffected eagerness to induce her to remain; and yet Paula stood firm and stuck to her resolution to leave the governor's mansion the next day.

"But where will you find directly a spot suitable for a new home?" exclaimed Nephoris, "a shelter appropriate for you?"

"Let that be my care!" spoke up the surgeon. "Believe me, noble lady, it is the best for all parties that Paula should change her place of abode. Only one thing more: I hope that she will be persuaded to remain in Memphis, at least for the present."

Hereupon Nephoris exclaimed:

"With us, with us only is her natural home. Perhaps for

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your uncle's sake God will turn your heart, and we shall begin all together a new and more pleasant life."

Paula's only reply was by a shake of her head, and yet Nephoris did not perceive it, because, for the third time, the metallic ring made itself heard, and it was her duty to answer the summons.

As soon as she had left the room, Paula drew a breath of relief and exclaimed:

"Heavens, but it was hard to refrain from taunting her to her face with the shameful crime of her reckless son. No, no, nothing would have induced me to do that; but I can not tell you how the mere sight of this woman excites me, and how light at heart I have felt since the bridges have been broken that bound me to this house and to Memphis."

"To Memphis?" asked the surgeon.

"Yes!" answered Paula, with animation. "I want to be gone, far, far from here, from the neighborhood of this woman and her son! Whither? Whether to Syria or Greece—anywhere suits me, that bears me away from this place."

"And me, your friend?" asked Philip.

"Your memory will go with me inscribed upon a grateful heart."

The physician smiled here, as though something had turned out according to his expectation, and said, after brief consideration:

"And where and how will the Nabbathæan find you if he actually discovers your father in the hermit of Mount Sinai?"

This question surprised and shocked Paula, and Philippus now brought forward every motive he could think of to convince her of the necessity for her stay in the City of the Pyramids. The next thing to be done was the restoration of her nurse to freedom, and he could promise her his co-operation in effecting this, and all that he suggested had so wise a reference to circumstances that must be considered and facts existing or likely to occur that she was astonished at the consideration and practical sense of the man with whom she had been accustomed to discuss only abstract matters, and chiefly for the sake of her father and Perpetua, but also in the hope of enjoying his society she consented, at least for the present, to remain in Memphis and take up her residence with one of her own faith—a friend of Philippus, through whose anecdotes she had long been acquainted with, and there to await the further development of her destiny. To be at a distance from Orion, never, never to see him again was the most fervent wish of her heart. Any situation seemed good to her where she need have no fear of

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meeting him. She hated him, and felt that her heart could never be at rest so long as this possibility existed. She longed, moreover, to be rid of the desire to follow his further career, which again and again haunted her with a strange and dreadful pertinacity. For this reason, and this only, she longed to depart; and could hardly be satisfied by the physician's assurance that her new host would know how to defend her against any unwelcome visitor. Furthermore, Philippus said that she need only call upon him to be made secure against intrusion.

As the two parted, the sun was rising from behind the eastern hills; and as they bade farewell Paula said:

"To-morrow, then, begins a new life for me; and with your help I can well imgaine that it will shape itself more auspiciously than the past one," and the doctor cheerfully rejoined:

"For me this new life began on yesterday."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARTING.

BETWEEN morning and noon Maria sat under the same sycamore-trees which had yesterday been the witnesses of poor Catharine's brief dream of love and bliss. She was seated on a low cane chair beside her governess Eudoxia, under whose supervision she was to transcribe the ten commandments from a Greek catechism.

Overcome by the increasing heat and perfume of the flowers, the teacher had fallen asleep, and her scholar's task was laid aside.

With tearful eyes she was gazing upon the mussel shells with which the walk was graveled, and employing her long ruler in scratching idly among them in the beginning, but then in tracing by their means the words "Paula" and "Paula, Maria's Favorite" in great capital letters. Only a butterfly following the movement of the wood now and then caused a bright look to flit across her sweet little face, whence the dark spirit of "grief" had not succeeded in wholly banishing cheerfulness. Nevertheless, her heart was aching. As around her, so throughout the whole garden and house silence reigned; for her grandfather's condition had become sensibly worse since before sunrise, and every noise had to be kept far from him.

Maria was just thinking about the poor patient—how much he had to suffer, and how grieved he would be at parting from Paula, when Catharine approached her through the avenue.

The sixteen-year-old girl did but little honor to-day to her

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name of humming-bird, for her dainty little feet dragged slowly through the gravel, her head hung down wearedly, and if one of the thousands of insects that disported themselves in the sunny morning air did but come near her she irritably struck at it with her fan.

When she reached Maria she gave her the accustomed morning salutation, but was responded to only by a reluctant nod, while the little girl half turned her back upon her, and continued designing her inscription.

Catharine, however, paid no heed to this cool welcome, but began sympathetically.

"Is it true that your poor grandpapa is not so well to-day?"

Maria shrugged her shoulders.

"They even say that he is right dangerously sick. I heard Philippus say so myself."

"That, indeed?" remarked Maria, without looking at her older friend, continuing to amuse herself as before.

"Orion is with him," Catharine went on to say. "And so Paula is actually going to leave?"

The child silently gave a nod of assent, and her swollen eyes filled anew with tears.

For the first time Catharine perceived that the little girl looked sad and did not utter voluntarily a single word. At any other time she would have disturbed herself little about this, but to-day her silence wounded her; it filled her with misgiving, and so she sat down opposite to Maria, who continued, without intermission, to handle her ruler, and said, distinctly and with feeling:

"It seems as if I had fallen out of your good graces since yesterday. As you choose; but I tell you that I do not like such rudeness."

These last sentences had been heard by the governess, who had been awakened by the high key of Catharine's voice, and assuming a dignified attitude, she asked, severely:

"How must one behave to dear guests, Maria?"

"I see no such person here," answered the child, pursing up her lips defiantly.

"But I do!" exclaimed the governess. "You are behaving like a young savage, not like a young lady brought up in Greek style. Catharine is no longer a child, if she does condescend often to play with you. Go directly and beg her pardon for this naughty speech."

"I?" asked the child; and her tone gave the most decided refusal to obey this order. Then she jumped up and exclaimed, with sparkling eyes:

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"We are no Greeks, neither she nor I, if you want to hear that once more. She is—is—is no more my dear guest, my friend. No, we have nothing, nothing at all to do with one another!"

"Are you mad?" cried Eudoxia, her long face now wearing a threatening aspect, while in spite of the growing heat of the day she arose from her capacious easy-chair and advanced upon her pupil as though prepared to force her to apologize. Maria, however, was nimbler than the elderly Greek; and bounding, flew down the avenue toward the river with the fleetness of a gazelle.

Eudoxia sought to follow, but was soon overcome by the heat; and as she paused, panting and exhausted, she saw Catharine, like her old self again, shoot past her, pursuing the child with a velocity that made her shudder.

Maria, soon perceiving that she was pursued by Catharine alone, moderated her pace, and under the shelter of a tall shrub waited for the friend whom she had renounced. Soon she was facing her with glowing cheeks, seizing both her hands and saying, indignantly:

"What was that you said just now? You—you— If I did not know what an uppish little creature you were, I would be ready—"

"You would be ready to accuse me falsely! But let me go now, or I'll bite you!" And when Catharine, upon this threat, freed her hands, she continued, still more violently, "Oh, oh! I have learned to know you since yesterday! And if you want to hear it again I'll let you know that I want no such friend! You should sink into the earth for very shame on account of the sin which you have committed. I am just ten years old, but before I would have done such a thing I had rather be locked up in that hot hole with poor, innocent Perpetua—I had rather be put to death as you are going to do with poor Hiram, honest man that he is. Fy! fy!"

Catharine's glowing cheeks had turned pale at these words, and because she had nothing to say in her defense, she tossed her head and replied as proudly and superciliously as she could:

"What does a child like you know of things that puzzle the brains of grown people!"

"Grown people!" laughed Maria, who was hardly three inches shorter than her opponent. "Grow to the proper size before you call yourself a grown lady. In two years you will just reach up to my eyes."

Now the blood mounted to the head of the sprightly Egyptian, and she gave the child a rousing slap on the face; but

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Maria stood before her as if petrified, and after casting her eyes down for a minute, and without uttering a complaint, she turned her back upon the other, and silently walked back into the shady avenue.

Catharine followed her with moist eyes. She felt that Maria was justified in disapproving of what she had done yesterday; for she herself had not been able to get any sleep, and was more and more coming to the conviction that she had acted badly, yes, unpardonably. Now she had again done something inexcusable! She felt that she had added to the child's afflictions, and this really grieved her. Like a servant-maid she silently followed Maria at some distance. Gladly she would have caught hold of her skirt, spoken kindly to her, yes, implored her forgiveness; and as she drew near the spot where the governess had again thrown herself back in her easy-chair, posing as the unfortunate victim of Egyptian heat, Catharine called Maria by name, and upon her declining to listen, she placed her hand on her shoulder and said, softly and pleadingly:

"Pardon me for having so far forgotten myself; but how can I help being so small. You know, indeed, if anybody teases me about it—"

"Then you get angry and slap them," replied the child, walking on. "Before yesterday I would probably have laughed at that box on my ear, for it would not have been the first I had gotten from you, or else I should have returned it, but just now," and as she spoke she shuddered involuntarily, "just now I felt as though a black slave had passed his dirty hand across my cheek. You are not the same as you were. You step quite differently, and, depend upon it, you do not look so pretty and merry as you used to do, and I know why; yesterday evening you committed a great sin."

"But, my precious," pleaded her companion, "you must not be so hard upon me. Perhaps I did not actually say everything I knew before the judges; but Orion, who holds me so dear, and whose wife I am to be—"

"He betrayed you into that sin!" cried the little girl. "He too was good and gay and friendly until yesterday; but since then— Oh, that miserable day!"

Here she was interrupted by the governess Eudoxia, who overwhelmed her with a flood of reproaches, and finally ordered her to resume her work.

Unresistingly the child obeyed this direction, and yet she had hardly righted her wax tablet before Catharine was again at her side whispering to her that certainly Orion had only said

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what he thought to be correct; and as for herself, she had really and truly been in doubt as to whether the pendant from Paula's chain had been a gem with a gold case or a mere piece of gold plate.

Hereupon Maria turned upon her suddenly and hotly, and, in order not to be understood by Eudoxia, addressed her remarks to her in her native Egyptian tongue, of which the Greek had scorned to learn even a single word.

"A wretched bit of gold plate, jagged at the edge, hung upon that pretty chain, and, moreover, got caught in your dress. It is before me now! And if you swore before the judges that it was a gem, then you told a lie. Look, here are the commandments given by the blessed Lord God himself upon Mount Sinai, and here it is written 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,' and whoever does so, the priest has declared to me is guilty of a deadly sin for which there is no forgiveness, either on earth or in heaven, without doing heavy penance and obtaining the especial grace of our Saviour. Thus it is written; and you, how could you say before the judges what is false and untrue and must ruin others?"

The one whom she accused looked down in shame and confusion, answering with hesitancy:

"Orion had asserted it so firmly and positively, and then—I do not know myself what came over me—but I was so bad, so— I could have killed her!"

"Who?" asked Maria, in bewilderment.

"You know—Paula."

"Her?" asked Maria, and her large eyes filled again with tears. "Is it possible! You used to love her just as much as I do, did you not? Did you not often stick to her like any burr?"

"Yes, to be sure! But she stood there before the judges looking so horribly proud; and then— But really and truly, Maria, you can not understand all this!"

"Can I not?" asked the child, crossing her arms. "How silly do you take me to be? You are head over ears in love with Orion; and because Paula looks like a queen compared with you, and is so much more beautiful and taller than you, and Orion himself—I've seen it with my own eyes—up to yesterday cared a thousand times more about her than you, you have grown jealous and envious of her. Oh, I know all about it! I know, too, that all the women fall in love with him, and that they cut off Mandana's ears on his account, and that his sweetheart at Constantinople sent him that little white dog. The maid-servants tell me all that they know—as much as I

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choose. And you have good reason, too, to be jealous of Paula, for if he could make it up with her, dear me! he would never look at you again, I can tell you! She is the loveliest, wisest, best girl in the whole world; and why should she not be proud? The false witness that you bore will cost poor Hiram his life; may the good Saviour forgive you at last. It is your affair and none of mine; but that Paula must leave this house on your account so that I shall never, never, never see her again, whether I can forget that, I know not, but I'll pray to God to help me to do so."

So saying, she broke forth into loud sobbing; and the teacher had already arisen to put an end to the conversation that she did not understand, and that therefore seemed to her disagreeable and irksome, when Catharine threw herself down on her knees before the child, encircled her in her arms, and likewise melting into tears, cried out:

"Maria, dear little Maria, forgive me. Oh, if you knew what I suffered already before I came here! Pardon me, Maria; once more be my good, sweet little Maria! Certainly, certainly you are a great deal better than I am! To what, dear Saviour, to what did I lower myself yesterday evening, and through him, only through him, whom nobody can help loving—only through Orion! Will you believe it? I do not at all know why he led me into this sin! But I must try not to favor him any more, to forget him altogether, although, although— Only to think, that he, he called me his betrothed; but seeing that he has deceived me so can I venture to become his wife? The whole night through I got no rest. Love him—do I love him? You know not how much; but I can not be his. I would rather go into the convent or cast myself into the Nile, and all this I'll tell to my mother."

The Greek had looked at the girls in astonishment, and certainly to see the young lady kneel before the child presented a strange spectacle. She listened to the rapid flow of her unintelligible talk and deliberated how she should bring her pupil, if need be, with the help of the grandmother to use more measured Greek gestures.

Now Paula was seen entering the avenue. The slaves who had followed her with several trunks and packages on a great sedan-chair proceeded straight to the Nile, where was waiting the boat which was to conduct her to her new home.

Silently and unobserved she let her eyes rest for some little while upon the touching scene presented by the two girls locked in each other's arms, and overheard the last words of the amiable young creature who had dealt her so hard a blow.

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She only suspected what had passed, but it was repugnant to her sense of honor to spy upon them longer, and so she called to Maria, and upon her flying to embrace her with every mark of passionate devotion, she stooped and covered her head and pretty face with kisses.

Then she freed herself from the child's clasp, and said softly, with a voice stifled by emotion:

"Farewell, my darling! In a few moments I shall no longer be one of you, and another, stranger home will be mine. Think kindly of me and never forget me, and know that you have not on earth a truer friend than myself."

More tears flowed at these words, and the child besought her not to go, not to forsake her; but Paula resisted her entreaties, touched and astonished to find that she had reaped such a large harvest of love in this spot where she had sowed so little.

Then she offered her hand to the governess to bid her good-bye, and when she turned to Catharine, the destroyer of her happiness, to tell her how hard it was to bid farewell, the poor girl fell on her knees before her, covering her hand with kisses, and accusing herself of the greatest criminality. Paula, however, did not allow her to go on, but raised her up, kissed her brow, and said that she understood how she had fallen into this sin, and that, like Maria, she would try to forgive her.

At the boat, which was manned by many oarsmen, she found Orion, the girls also having accompanied her to the landing.

Twice this morning he had tried in vain to obtain an interview with her, and looked pale and disordered. With a magnificent bouquet in his hand, he tendered a passing salutation to Maria and his betrothed, paying no heed to Catharine's returning it only mutely and timidly.

Then he drew near to Paula and whispered in her ear that Hiram was safe, and thereupon besought her, if she hoped for pardon for her own sins, to bestow upon him only a few moments. But she declined granting his request with a silent shrug of the shoulders, and upon her getting into the boat, he stretched out his hand to assist her, but she purposely ignored it, and held out her right hand to the doctor. Then he sprung after her into the boat, and whispered into her ear, with trembling voice:

"A poor, unhappy wretch implores mercy of you. I was out of my senses yesterday. I love you, maiden, how much—you shall learn!"

"Enough!" said she, aloud, standing up in the rocking boat. Philippus supported her, but Orion forced his bouquet of flowers upon her, and said, so that all might hear:

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"Your departure will greatly distress father. He is so ill that we dared not allow you to take leave of him. Have you any message to send him?"

"If so, I'll select another messenger!" answered she, severely.

"And how, if he should suddenly ask the reason for your sudden departure?"

"Then your mother and Philippus will explain to him about it."

"But he was your guardian, and I know your property—"

"Is in safe hands with him."

"But supposing that the doctor's fears should be verified?"

"Then I can recover my own through my *kyrios*."

"You will get it without recourse to him. Do you know no pity, no relenting?"

Then, instead of making any reply whatever, she threw the bunch of flowers that he had given her into the water; but he jumped ashore, and, without paying any heed to observers, he drew his hand through his hair and pressed it to his glowing brow.

The boat cut the waves, the oarsmen diligently worked their oars, but Orion gazed after it, and his chest heaved stormily, until a small hand seized his and Maria's gentle, childish voice said, soothingly:

"Compose yourself, uncle! I know what is troubling you."

"What do you know?" asked he, harshly.

"You are repenting of what you and Catharine did yesterday to injure her and that unhappy Hiram—"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed he, cutting her short abruptly. "Where is Catharine?"

"I am to tell you that she can not see you to-day. She loves you so; but she, too, is repenting bitterly of what she has done."

"She may spare herself that trouble," continued the young man. "If there is anything to be sorry for, it falls on me; it is torturing me to death here. But all this—the devil take me! What has this child to do with it! Be off with you! Eudoxia, set this little girl to work!"

So saying he took the little one's head between his hands, kissed her vehemently upon the brow, and then thrust her into the arms of her governess, who obediently led her away.

Orion no sooner found himself alone than he leaned against a tree and moaned like a wounded stag. His heart swelled nigh to bursting. Ah, ah! Mocked, the best of earth lost! And now he laid his hands on the tree and pressed his brow to

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it until it pained him. He was filled with the keenest self-reproach. It was as if he had been deeply intoxicated, and during his fit of drunkenness had lain his own house in ashes. How it all could have happened he no longer knew himself! After his nightly ride he had had the treasurer Nilus awakened, and commissioned him secretly to set Hiram at liberty. But he was only fully sobered by the sight of the havoc wrought in his father by this last stroke. The dread reality of death had looked him full in the face from this couch, and it had seemed to him as if he could not see the dear man depart before he had made his peace with Paula, obtained her forgiveness, conducted her into the presence of his father, to whom she was so dear, and besought his blessing for her and for himself.

Twice he had hurried to her room from the sick-chamber, and implored her to grant him an interview, but in vain, and such a farewell as he had taken of her! Hard, inexorable, cruel she had been to him, and when he compared her present mode of action with what it had been before the breach with him, he was forced to the conclusion that there was something unnatural in her demeanor. This inhuman hardness on the part of the beautiful woman, whose affections he had once possessed, and who now flung the bunch of flowers that he had given her into the water, did not represent her heart but the deliberate resolve to let him feel her anger. But, deeply offended that she was, why had she not betrayed to the judges the fact that she had caught him stealing the emerald? All was not yet lost, and breathing more freely he proceeded toward the house, whither duty and anxiety about his father called him. His bouquet was floating away on the bosom of the river. "Hatred flung it in," thought he, "and yet before it reaches the sea many flowers will bloom in its midst that had been immature buds when she threw it away. She can not love any one but me. I feel it, I know it! Since we looked into each other's eyes for the first time the fate of our hearts was decided. What she hates in me is my mad crime; what first turned her against me was her just indignation at my courtship of Catharine. But that evil deed has been a dream in my life that is not to be repeated, and Catharine—once already I have sinned against her, but will not go on with it through a whole long life. I have sported so much with love that finally I undervalued its power. Laughingly I yielded my own wishes to those of my mother, and from that one thing all this dreadful fruit has sprung. But no, no, all is not lost yet! Paula will hear me, and when she beholds the outlook here, when I have made known to her the good as well as the bad,

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when she learns that my heart only went astray and comes back again to her, who has taught me that love is no sport, but deep, earnest, mastering all men, then all—all will be changed."

While revolving these thoughts his features lighted up with rapture, and moving forward he thus continued his reflections:

"If she is mine then I know that all the good qualities which I have inherited from my ancestors will develop themselves. When my mother summoned me to my father's bedside, she said: 'Come, Orion, life is getting earnest for me, and you, our house and your father.' Yes, earnest indeed it is, whatever may be the end of all this! To win Paula, to become reconciled to her, to stay near her, at her side, to act worthily and grandly, that is the aim in life that I need. With her, yes, certainly I can attain to it if one with her. Without her or with that little glittering plaything, Catharine, old age will bring me nothing but joyless satiety and horror, or if I call it by its right name, bitter remorse. As Achilles gained fresh strength when he touched his mother earth, yes, father, I feel myself grow if I do but think of her. She is health and honor, the other the ruin and misery of my future. Poor, dear father, you will, you shall survive this stroke, in order to see the fulfillment of all your fond hopes for your son. Paula was always dear to you, perhaps you will be the one to reconcile and lead her to me, and how dear will she be to you, and so God grant will my mother be when she sees her shining by my side as the ornament of our house, this city, this country, like a queen, and the guardian angel of your son."

Exalted, carried away by these thoughts, he had reached the *viridarium*. There the steward Sebek awaited his young master, and said, softly:

"Master is still asleep, as the doctor predicted, but his countenance— Oh, if Philippus were only here!"

"You have dispatched the carriage with the swiftest horses to the Convent of Saint Cecilia?" asked Orion, quickly; and upon Sebek's assent, and disappearing inside the house, the young man, thrilling with horror, threw himself on his knees in front of a pillar, whence hung a crucifix, and uplifted hands and heart in a fervent prayer.

CHAPTER XV.

EBLIS.

THE physician had introduced Paula to her new home, and lost no time in making her acquainted with those under whose

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protection she was now to be, and who were to prepare for her a fairer existence.

He was allowed only a few moments to devote to her and her hosts; for, hardly had he conducted her into the spacious flower-decked apartments which now received them, before two messengers were announced who wished to speak with him. She knew in what a critical condition her uncle was, and the prospect of losing him so soon made her feel vividly what she had possessed in him.

One of the messengers was a young Arab who came from the other side of the Nile, and handed Philip a letter from the merchant Haschim. The old gentleman informed him in this, that in consequence of his eldest son's having had a severe fall, found himself compelled to set off for Dschidda on the Red Sea. He besought Philippus furthermore to care for his wounded caravan-leader, who was dear to him, and if he thought right, to remove him from the governor's mansion and have him nursed until well in a quieter place.

He will keep an eye upon the affairs of the noble daughter of Thomas. This epistle was accompanied by a purse full of gold pieces.

The second messenger was commissioned to bear Philippus, in the small chariot, with the fast trotter, without delay to the ill Mukaukas.

He obeyed this summons promptly, and the fleet-footed animal that was not spared by its driver, brought him speedily to his destination.

A glance at the sufferer taught him that the beginning of the end had come, and yet true to his principle, never to give up hope until the heart of the patient had ceased to beat, without paying any attention to Orion, who knelt at the head of his father's bed, he lifted up the unconscious form, nodded to the deaconess—a well-trained sick nurse—applied fresh plasters to the forehead and neck of the stricken man, and proceeded to bleed him.

Wearily the Mukaukas lifted his heavy eyelids, looked uneasily hither and thither, and when he recognized his kneeling son, his weeping wife and the physician, he attempted to speak, but uttered only inarticulate sounds; for the paralyzed tongue would no longer obey his will: "Two pillules, Philippus!"

The physician yielded unresistingly to this request of the dying man, who now closed his eyes again, only, however, to open them soon, and with the same exertion as before, but evidently in the full possession of his faculties, to stammer:

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"The end is coming! The blessing of the Church— The bishop, Orion!"

The young man immediately hurried out, in order to usher into the sick-room the prelate, who was already waiting in the *viridarium*, with two deacons, an exorcist and the sacristan, who bore the needful utensils for the administration of extreme unction.

Quietly and with devotion he partook of the holy sacrament; he saw and heard the performances of the exorcist, who, by movements of the hand and pious sayings, sought to banish wicked spirits and deliver him from the power of the devil; but he could no longer swallow down the wine with bread mixed in it after a Jacobite fashion. Orion did this in his stead, and at this the dying man smiled and stammered, softly:

"Every blessing be yours, my son! The Lord, it seems, refuses me his precious blood, and yet—yet— Let me try once more."

This time he succeeded in swallowing some wine and a few crumbs of bread, and thereupon Bishop Plotinus, a mild old gentleman of noble, dignified appearance, comforted him, and asked him if he were contrite, and died in full faith in the mercy of his Lord and Saviour, repenting of his sins and forgiving his enemies.

Then the sick man, with difficulty, nodded his head and faltered out: "Even the Melchites, who murdered my children, and also, also the patriarch, the head of our Church, who was only too glad to have accomplished through poor me what he hesitated to do himself. That—that— But Plotinus—you worthy, wise servant of the Lord—answer me according to your best conviction: May I believe in this dying hour that there has been no criminality in my concluding a peace with the Arabic expellers of the Greeks—in this hour am I to consider the Melchites as being of an alien faith?"

Then the prelate drew up his commanding form to its full height, and his mild features assumed a decided and stern expression, as he exclaimed:

"You know the words which were proclaimed at the Synod of Ephesus, and which ought to be engraven on the heart of every true Jacobite as though on marble and bronze: 'Let those who divide Christ'—and this is what the Melchites do—'be cut in two with the sword, be hewn to pieces, be burned alive!' Such a curse has never been fulminated by any head of the Church, against the Moslems, worshipers of one only God!"

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Here the sufferer drew a long breath, yet soon afterward said, sighing:

"And, nevertheless, Benjamin, the Patriarch, and John of Niku, have grieved me to the soul! You, too, Plotinus, bear the crook, and I will confess to you: Your brethren in office, the shepherds of the Jacobite flocks, have spoiled for me, through pain and fear, a hundred days and nights, and I have been near cursing them. But before the night came the Lord enlightened my soul, and I forgave them, and through you implore their blessing and forgiveness. Unwillingly the Church has opened its door to me these last years, but what servant would have been allowed to grumble against his lord from whom he expected all mercy! Then hear me! As a true and devoted servant of the Church, I close my eyes, and in token of this I want to endow her to the best of my ability. I want to adorn her with rich, costly gifts. I want to—but I—I can get no further. Speak for me, Orion. You know—those precious stones—that tapestry—"

Now the son of the dying man explained to the bishop that his father had destined to the Church a rich donation of priceless jewels. He wished to be laid beside his father in St. John's Church at Alexandria, his body to be consecrated in front of the sepulcher of his ancestors, in the city of the dead, and for the prayers which were to be made for him he had set apart a considerable sum in his will. The priest heard this with satisfaction, and granted him full, free absolution unconditionally, then blessed him with fervent zeal, and left the apartment.

Philippus breathed more freely after the clerical party left, and frequently changed his plasters, while the dying man lay for a long time still and with closed eyes. Then he rubbed them as though revived, raised his head a little with the doctor's help, opened his eyes again, and said:

"Draw off this ring from my finger, Orion, and wear it in honor. Where is little Maria? Where is Paula? I want to bid them farewell also."

The young man and his mother exchanged embarrassed glances, but the latter quickly bethought herself and said:

"We have already sent for Maria, but Paula—you know she was not satisfied with us—and after what happened yesterday—"

"Well?" asked the patient.

"She suddenly left our house, and in peace with me, mind; and yet she is still at Memphis and has spoken very lovingly of

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you, wanted to see you and sent many affectionate messages to you, and if you are very anxious to see her—"

Here the sick man tried to nod his head, but in vain. He did not insist upon having her summoned, yet a look of deep melancholy settled upon his features, and at the same time his lips murmured, softly:

"The daughter of Thomas! Nobler and fairer than them all."

"Nobler and fairer than them all!" repeated Orion, with a loud voice, vibrating with genuinely deep emotion, and then begged the doctor and the deaconess to leave him alone with his parents.

As soon as these had withdrawn, the young man spoke softly and urgently into the ear of the patient:

"You said the right word, father, she is nobler and better, fairer and purer minded than any other maiden. I love her and have set my heart upon winning her. Father, father! This pleases you, you consent, do you not? You dearest, best of parents, I see you do!"

"Yes, yes, yes," gasped the sick man, turning upward his bloodshot eyes, and continued to falter, with great effort: "Blessings, my blessing upon you and Paula. You must repeat it to her. Had she trusted cheerfully to the old man as at first, the freedman would not have robbed us. Brave soul, how she fought for the poor fellow! Will hereafter listen to a fuller account of it if my strength holds out. Only why is she not here?"

"She would have loved so to bid you farewell," remarked Nephoris, "but you were asleep—"

"Was she in such haste to be gone?" asked her husband with a bitter smile. "Perhaps fear about that emerald has had something to do with this! But how could I get angry with her? Hiram surely acted without her consent, did he not? Well, I knew it! Ah! her dear, beautiful face! I should love to see it once more. The delight of mine eyes, my partner at backgammon! True heart! How she clung to her father and would have sacrificed everything for him! But you, you, old wife— But no reproaches at this hour! You, mother, you, my Nephoris— Thanks, a thousand thanks for so much love and goodness! How sacred, how mystical is the bond woven by such a Christian marriage as ours? Mark that, Orion! And you, mother! It distresses me! You do not grieve the girl again—say—it soothes my last hours—say that you too bless their union; Paula, Orion. For both—both—I dared not earlier—what better could we both hope for?"

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Then the matron clasped her hands together and sobbed:

"All, all that you wish; but, father, but Orion, our faith and dear Saviour—poor little Catharine!"

"Catharine?" repeated the dying man, and his flaccid lips relaxed into a pitiful smile. "Our son and the hum—hum—You know what I mean!"

Then his eyes began to glisten more brightly, and in low tones, but with as much animation as if his death were still far off, he exclaimed:

"George, the son of the Mukaukas, I am called the great Mukaukas; and our race, vigorous men of stately proportions—all, all; my father, uncle, our dead sons, and Orion here—nothing but palms and oaks! And now such a dwarf, such a mere blade of rice to be grafted on that gloriously grand old stock! What a progeny! Oh! oh! wretched little mortals! But Paula—that cedar of Lebanon—Paula, she will bring new life into that fine old race."

"But our faith, our faith!" groaned Nephoris. "And you, Orion, you know how fond of you she is?"

"Yes and no; let us rest now," implored the deeply affected young man. "Oh, father, if I know that your blessing—"

"Our faith, good faith!" interposed the Mukaukas, with breaking voice.

"I'll keep mine!" cried Orion, drawing his father's hands to his lips. "Think you only, keeping the picture before your mind, of how Paula and I will manage in this house, and how a new family will grow up in it, worthy of the great Mukaukas, worthy of its forefathers!"

"I see it, I see it," faltered the sick man, falling back helplessly among his cushions.

Philippus was summoned without delay; and at the same time with him little Maria entered the chamber weeping.

The physician's new attempts to resuscitate were not without result; the dying man once more opened his eyes and said, more audibly and in a stronger voice than before:

"It smells of musk here—that is the perfume which announces the coming of the death-angel."

Thereupon he lay for a long while motionless and silent. His eyes were closed, but his corrugated brow showed that he was thinking laboriously. Finally he sighed and said, hardly intelligibly:

"It was so; it is so; the Greek has arbitrarily hounded my people like dogs; the Moslem too is a foreigner; but he acts justly. What has been done I could not alter; but it is well, well as it has turned out!"

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Then he repeated the word "well" a number of times, shuddered, and gasped forth:

"My feet are so cold; but let be, let be. I love coolness!"

The physician, with the deaconess, set herself to heat some wood for the warming of his feet, and the sick man looked after them gratefully, and continued:

"At church, in the house of God, I often found it deliciously cool; and now death is made easy to me through her forgiveness. You, my son, hold to her! A member of our house may be no apostate. The new faith—with incredible power it subjects kingdom after kingdom—ambition, avarice, drive thousands into her arms. But we, we stand firm for Christ, and are no traitors! Had I—I the Mukaukas—done the will of the caliph in this I might have governed my country as a prince, in his name. How many have gone over to the Moslems. The temptation is coming to you, too; and their faith offers much that attracts the multitude. They picture to themselves a paradise with unspeakably alluring pleasures; but we, son, we'll meet again in ours, shall we not?"

"Yes, yes, yes, father," cried the young man. "I'll remain a Christian, stand fast and firm—"

"Beautiful! good!" exclaimed the sick man. He would not be reminded purposely that his son wanted to marry a Melchite, and continued, hurriedly: "Paula— But nothing more of that— The faith— Be true to yours— Else— As for the rest, my son, seek the only way; you are—walking in the right one; and because, just because I know that, I am dying so peacefully. I have richly cared for your temporal weal. I have been a good husband, a—true father, have I not, my Saviour, have I not, Nephoris? And what is my best and surest dependence is that, for many, many long years I have been a judge in this land, and never, no, not a single time—you my shepherd and comforter, you are my witness—was I—oh, it does me good!—was I wittingly and willingly an unjust judge. The poor was to me as the rich, the mighty as the helpless widow. Who would have dared—"

Here he paused; and while his eyes were wandering aimlessly around, they met those of little Maria, who was kneeling at the head of the bed on the side opposite to Orion, and immediately the dying man, who had just been summing up the accounts of a long life, rich in activity, ceased to reflect; and when the child saw that he tried in vain to turn his motionless head to her in passionate, painful excitement she threw herself upon his body, kissing his mouth and cheeks without being de-

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terred by the fixed stare of his eyes and the altered color of his beloved countenance.

"Grandfather, dear grandpapa, don't leave us yet! stay, oh, please, please, stay with us!"

At this something like a smile flew over his dry lips, and all the tenderness with which his heart overflowed for this lovely young creature should have found expression in his voice; but he could only falter, indistinctly:

"Maria, my darling! For your sake I would like to live long, very long; but the other world—I am standing on its threshold. Farewell, the time has come to part."

"No, no! I'll pray, pray, oh, so fervently, until you get well!" cried the child; but he added:

"No! The Saviour is already holding me by the hand. Farewell, once more, farewell! Is your Paula with you? Have you got her—I do not see her—have you not brought her with you, sweetheart? Did she—did she leave us in anger? If she only knew— Your Paula has treated us right badly."

Then the child nestled her little face close up to the head of her old, best, and dearest friend. Full of the horrible affair that had so revolted her upright nature, and deprived her of rest already for an evening, a long night, and a morning, she must needs confide it to him. For years he had supplied to her the place of her own father so affectionately, and now he was to die and leave her forever! But she could not see him depart with a false impression of the friend whom she loved so devotedly, and so she poured her tale into his ear with subdued voice, but great earnestness:

"But one thing, grandfather, you must know before the Saviour receives you into His heavenly bliss. Paula has told the truth; and never, never lied, not even to save her Hiram. A gold plate, no gem hung upon her necklace yesterday at noon. No matter what Orion says, I saw it myself, and can not be mistaken, as certainly as I hope to see you and my poor father in heaven. And Catharine came to herself just now and confessed that she had committed a great sin and borne false witness before the judges to please her dear Orion. I do not know what Hiram had done to him; but upon Catharine's testimony the judges condemned him to death; and Paula—that you are to know if nothing else—had nothing to do with the theft of the emerald, nothing, nothing in the round world."

Orion, in his kneeling posture, was condemned to hear every word that the little one whispered so eagerly, and each one cut him to the heart. Several times he would have clutched at her across the bed, and would have liked to fell her to the

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ground before his father's eyes; but in the pain and surprise which paralyzed his whole being, he did not even find the strength to interrupt her with a single word.

What was said was said.

As though crushed he caught at the bedstead, and when his father turned his eyes upon him and gasped forth, huskily:

"Then has the court, *our* court, pronounced an unjust sentences!" he nodded his head overwhelmed with shame.

Now the dying man stammered out yet more indistinctly and without proper connection the question:

"That stone—out of the tapestry—you—is it possible—did you—did you—you yourself take that emerald— I can not—"

And Orion came to the aid of his father, who struggled in vain to utter the dreadful word, and said, humbly and softly, for he would rather have changed places with the dying than deceive him in this hour:

"I took it, father; but I swear by the love which I bear you and mother that this first reckless deed of my life, that must entail such horrible—"

"Shall also be the last," he would have closed with, but no sooner had the words "I took it" passed his lips than the dying man's body trembled violently, and the look in his eye altered horribly, and before his son had finished his vow, the unhappy father by a mighty effort drew himself up erect, and shouted in the face of the pale youth, whose bosom heaved with penitential sobs, as fast as his heavy, paralyzed tongue would allow, with gurgling, wrathful sounds:

"You, you, to disgrace that ancient, immaculate court of justice! You? Begone! A robber, an unjust judge, a falsifier of testimony. Menas's last grandson! If I could get at you with these hands— You— You— Away with you, villain!"

With this wild outburst sunk back among his pillows George, the mild and just Mukaukas, his wide-open, bloodshot eyes staring into vacancy, while from his open mouth rang forth in frequent repetition, but more and more faintly, the word "villain," his swollen hands clutched at the light covering spread over him, a strange shrill whistle was emitted from his wide open lips, and with relaxed limbs the powerless corpse of the great dignitary sunk against Orion like a felled palm-tree.

Raving, with disheveled hair and reddened eyes, the young man straightened himself and shook the corpse as if he would force him to live on so that he might hear his promise, his vow, witness the tears of his penitence, forgive him and take

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back the frightful execration with which he had taken leave of his well-beloved and spoiled child.

During this outbreak of wild despair the physician returned, cast a glance at the distorted countenance of the deceased, laid his hand upon the region of the heart and said, while he drew little Maria away from the scene in grave and troubled tones:

"This good and just man has ceased to breathe among the living."

Hereupon Orion shrieked aloud, and thrust Maria from him who had drawn near to him, because, young as she was, she nevertheless felt that she had inconsiderately brought this most dreadful evil upon her uncle, and that it was for her to show love for him.

Then the child hurried to her grandmother; but here also she met with repulse, for that lady pushed her aside, and cast herself on her knees beside the despairing son, in order to weep with him and to console with fond words the inconsolable one from whom, just a few minutes before, she had expected the best comfort for herself.

And yet her motherly address found no echo in his broken spirit.

CHAPTER XVI.

PAULA IN HER NEW HOME.

When the doctor had parted from Paula he had told her that the Mukaukas's end might occur at any moment, or that he might be wrestling with death for weeks longer. This prospect seemed to console her; for the thought that the only true friend whom she had possessed in Memphis before Philippus, would go away forever, without having heard her justification, would seem to her intolerable. Nothing less than probable was it, that in the environs of Nephoris any one save her grandchild would think of her with love, and she hardly desired it; but she did not wish to forfeit in the governor's mansion that respect to which she felt that she was entitled. Did her friend succeed in prolonging her uncle's days, then an open conference with him might win back his old friendly feelings and favorable opinion.

Her new home seemed to her like a way station, an oasis in the desert of her solitary existence, and what she had learned among her Memphis connections could not but prove beneficial here. Just now hope in her heart had risen superior to grief and disillusion. Only Orion's propinquity rested like a threat-

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ening hail-cloud over the freshly sown field of her inward peace, and yet nothing attached her more firmly to Memphis besides the necessity of awaiting the messenger here, than the possibility of following his future career, at least from afar. What she felt for him she herself called deep aversion, and unwilling as she was to acknowledge it to herself, this formed an essential part of her interior life.

Her new hosts had received her as a welcome guest, and certainly they did not seem to be poor people. Their house was very roomy, and although old and unpretending, was furnished neatly and tastefully. She had been surprised at the scrupulous care with which the garden was tended; and she had seen herself a humpbacked gardener and several children at work in it. Strange helpmeets! For like their decrepit master they were all afflicted with some bodily ailment. The bit of land belonging to it, which reached up to the street following the river, was confined and bounded on both sides by extensive grounds, and not far from the spot where it came closest to the Nile began the bridge of boats which united Memphis with the island of Rhoda. To its right was situated a beautiful residence well-known to her as the palace of the widow Susannah, to the left a far-stretching heath, where grew slender palm-trees, sycamores with spreading branches, and a dense thicket of blue-green tamarisk-trees, dispensing shade. From this assembly of magnificent flowering shrubs and ancient trees peeped forth a long, yellow building crowned with a turret, which was likewise a familiar object to her, for it had often been mentioned in the governor's mansion, and attended by Perpetua—she had even visited there a few times. This was the convent of Saint Cecilia, and sheltered the last nuns of the orthodox faith suffered to remain at Memphis; for while all the other sisterhoods of their confession had long since been banished from the city, these were permitted to remain in their old quarters, not only because they were prized as good sick nurses, a distinction shared with them by orders of the Melchite persuasion, but much more because the city in its fallen estate did not wish to dispense with the heavy tax paid by them yearly. This represented the interest upon a considerable property, which a wise progenitor of the Mukaukas had left to the convent, to be sure, under the prudential condition, which was confirmed by Theodosius with his imperial seal, that this establishment, so soon as the convent should be broken up, together with the grounds and buildings which the community owed likewise to the generosity of the founder, should become the property of the Christian emperor reigning at the time.

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The deceased Mukaukas, in spite of his well-founded dislike of everything Melchite, took good care not to stand in the way of these useful nuns and withdraw so rich a possession from his impoverished native city, that it might fall into the hands of the wealthy Moslems. The deed upon which the sisterhood relied was good, and the governor, who was both learned in the law and just-minded, however anxious he had been of late years for the security of his own person, had not only left them undisturbed, but had firmly and decidedly stood up for the validity of their rights in opposition to the mighty head of the Jacobite Church. Of course the senate of the former capital, Memphis, consented to its retention, and not only endured these sisters of another creed, but granted them many a lift.

The Jacobite clergy of the city overlooked them, and only at Easter directed their eyes toward the convent; for, on the Saturday before this festival, conformably to a regulation issued before the Monophystic schism, the nuns had to present to the Church of Christ, embroidered priestly garments, wine from the superior vintages of Kochone in the neighborhood of the pyramid with the steps, and a considerable quantity of flowers and pastry work. Thus this old nunnery had held its ground, and although the whole of Egypt had turned either Jacobite or Moslem, and many old sisters in the last year had "laid off this mortal coil," nobody ever asked how it came that the number of nuns always kept at the same notch, until, instead of the Melchite Cyrus, the Jacobite Archbishop Benjamin occupied the patriarch's seat at Alexandria. To him these heretical women at Memphis, "those hawks in the dove-cote," as he styled them, were an abomination, and he was of opinion that the old document of presentation ought to signify—inasmuch as there was no longer any Christian emperor, and the word "Christian" was in the deed—that, at its breaking up, the convent should fall to the only Christian power in the land at present, viz., himself and his church.

The ill will which the patriarch cherished against the Mukaukas had been intensified into enmity through the opposition which he had met with from him in this affair.

From this convent there reached Paula's ears a plaintive dirge. Was the worthy prioress dead? No, this token must refer to another case of death, for, through the windows of her corner chamber, opening upon the Nile, there came to her from the street, the bridge of boats, and a few skiffs on the stream, the strangely shrill wails of Egyptian women. No Jacobite inhabitant of Memphis would have dared to give such expression to his grief upon occasion of the decease of a

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Melchite, and as the volume of the lamentations increased, she was transfixed by the thought that her beloved uncle and friend had closed his dear, weary eyes.

Deeply moved and with tearful glance, she saw how genuinely the death of this upright man was lamented by all his fellow citizens. Yes, only to him and no other Egyptian could this universal, this passionately expressed grief refer! On the street women mourners besmeared their bosoms and foreheads with mud from the shores of the Nile; men stood together in large groups, with passionate gestures beating themselves on head and breast. Upon the bridge of boats one man would stop another, and from there, too, penetrated to her ears heart-rending shrieks.

At last Philippus made his appearance, only to confirm her fears.

The death of the governor had touched him no less nearly than herself, and he must report to Paula what he knew of the last hours of the deceased.

"Some good thing," wound up the doctor, "is always confronting me in the midst of gloom. Who likes to admit that he has erred? And yet nothing rejoices us so much as the knowledge that a man and his disposition are better than we had been led to believe. This Orion, who has so shamefully sinned against himself and you, is not yet a lost man."

"Is he not?" remarked Paula. "Then he has deceived you too."

"Deceived?" asked the doctor. "Hardly so. Alas, I have stood by many, many death-beds, for they call me in chiefly when the hand of death has his victim already in his grasp. I have met thousands of mourners at these sad seasons, and I tell you they are the best school for every one to enter who wishes to arrive at a knowledge of human nature. Here and at market, where the question is of mine and thine, we see beneath us, as it were, into the open breast of man—we, who conceal from the world what is great and noble in us just as anxiously as the rest hide what is low and mean. After observation of the dying and those who bewail them, without being either a Menander or a Lucian, yet I could sketch a series of pictures of men from life that would be as true as though they had turned their souls inside out for me."

"That the dying appear as they are," answered Paula, "I verily believe. They have no longer reason to pay heed to what others think; but the mourners? In the first place, custom prescribes that they seem to be grieved and shed tears."

"Yes, mourning is a thing expected at death-beds," replied

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the doctor, "but the dying chamber is like a church. Death consecrates it, and he who faces it eye to eye often lets fall the mask, with which he has been wont to deceive his fellow men. Then there are faces to be seen which would make you shudder, but also others, in the contemplation of which one finds it in his heart to look with new respect upon the degenerate race to which we belong."

"And for so consoling an appearance you take Orion, the robber, the false witness and unjust judge?" asked Paula, starting up in indignation and surprise.

"Bless us!" laughed the doctor. "Like all the rest of womankind. A bit of jugglery, and in a trice that is crimson which was only pale pink awhile ago! No, the son of the Mukaukas has not attained to such brilliancy of tint as yet, but—and so much I prize highly—but nevertheless he has a feeling, impressible heart. Although really I have good reason to regard him as the worst of the worst, I entertain no doubt but that he was sincerely devoted to his father. So long as I was permitted to be a witness of this death-bed scene, father and son parted in all tenderness and friendliness, and when finally the poor heart of the brave old man ceased to beat, I again found Orion in a condition to which only those are brought who love and have lost their dearest."

"Comedy!" exclaimed Paula.

"There were no spectators to encourage such an exhibition, my dear friend! Orion would hardly make such exertions before his mother and little Maria."

"But he is a poet and a highly endowed one too. Glorious songs of his own composition he sings to the lyre; his winged, versatile mind adapts itself to every mood; yet his soul has become corrupt, steeped in profligacy as a sponge is saturated with water. He is a vessel laden with rare gifts, but what was good and great in him, has all been lost, all, all!"

These words had flowed volubly from the maiden's lips. Indignation had flushed her cheeks and she believed that she had brought the surgeon over to her way of thinking, but he shook his head gravely and said:

"Just indignation carries you too far. As you have often found fault with my sharpness and skepticism, now I implore you to grant me your sympathy in an experience against which you would probably have had nothing to object until day before yesterday. I have met villains of every sort. Only think, how many cases of murder by poison it has devolved upon me to investigate!"

"Homer calls Egypt the land of poison," cried Paula.

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"And strangely Christianity has not altered it at all in this respect. The wise Kosmos too, who has seen the whole earth, says that he nowhere met with more malice, treachery, hatred and ill will than here."

"You see, then, in how good a school my experiences as to the evil in man have been matured," smiled the doctor; "and they teach that there is no sinner or criminal, however debased, cruel and unscrupulous he may be, in whom some good quality is not to be found. Do you remember that horrible female poisoner Nechebt, who murdered both her brothers and her own father? She was seized hardly three weeks ago; and this same beast in human shape, for her dissipated son in the imperial army, suffered hunger and thirst to the verge of starvation, and finally followed the trade of a mixer of poisons, not in order to improve her own wretched condition, but in order to supply her bad boy with the means for new debaucheries. I could give a thousand similar examples, but will only mention that of one of the most ferocious robbers, who evaded the officers of justice a hundred times, and finally fell into their hands, guess through what cause? Why, he had heard that his little old mother was very sick, and an overpowering desire came over him to see the wrinkled little old woman once more, and kiss her as he had done when a child. Thus Orion—spoiled as we must otherwise deem him—has, at all events, one quality that we must approve of, viz., tender love for father and mother. Your sponge has not yet imbibed profligacy to its fullest extent; it still has pores and cells that offer their resistance, and so long as the heart is of that number, I say hopefully of him, as I have done of others, with the Roman Horace: '*Nil Desperandum.*'* It would be wrong to give him up utterly."

Paula found no answer to this assertion, indeed it came to her mind that Orion, if he had not lied, had wooed Catharine with her own image in his heart, only out of love to his mother, and just as the doctor, who was anxious to turn the conversation upon some other subject, was about to return to the closing hours of the Mukaukas, one of the crippled servant-maids came in to say that a woman was without desiring to speak with the daughter of Thomas. A few minutes later Paula was in the arms of her faithful old friend, the nurse, who rejoiced as heartily, laughing and crying at the same time, as though she had never known a sorrow, while Paula, the

* Nothing is to be despaired of.

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younger woman, could not be lifted out of gloom, so cut to the heart was she by what had happened.

Perpetua understood her, and was not at all hurt by the composure with which she received her outburst of delight.

She had been well treated, she said, in her hot prison, and a half hour ago young Master Orion himself had opened the door of her dungeon. He had been very gracious, but at the same time so pale and sad!

The overbearing young man was quite changed, his tear-swollen eyes had touched her, Perpetua, to tears. May God forgive him for his conduct yesterday to her Paula and herself. He must have been possessed by evil spirits, for he had not been at all like himself. Naturally he had a kind, good heart, and although he had shown himself harsh and unjust, as regards poor Hiram, before the judges, he had already made up for it early this morning, not only by opening his prison-doors, but sending him—she knows this through the treasurer Nilus—back home to Damascus laden with presents, besides having with him his boy and two horses. Let him refuse him forgiveness who has no need himself to be forgiven. The great Augustine himself was no pattern of virtue in his youth, and had become nevertheless a bright light in the Church, and so, even now, the son of the Mukaukas might follow in his father's footsteps. He was certainly a handsome, prepossessing man, who would be sure to come to good in the end. This very day he had deported himself as gravely and solemnly as a judge, and perhaps he had already begun to walk in better ways. What did Paula think of it? He had escorted her himself to his mother's carriage, and ordered the charioteer to drive her here. The treasurer Nilus had come with her in order to convey a message to her. Next he had repaired to the convent of Saint Cecilia.

Now Paula directed her to look for him there, and as soon as Perpetua had left the room, she exclaimed to the doctor:

"Already you have a companion in your views! How queer people are! Yesterday evening, my brave Betta esteemed no abyss of hell too deep for our enemy, and now? Why, to be led in person to the carriage by such a gentleman is flattering, and lo! how quickly my little old woman has forgotten everything bad, how calm and content she is since she has obtained gracious permission to pack up her dearly beloved, well-kept things, with her own hands. You once told me that the Jacobites had made a Saint Orion out of the Heathen god Osiris, and so my Betta sees already in the son of the Mukaukas a second Saint Augustine. I can see that she already reveres

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him as her tutelary genius, and when we get back to Syria she will be beseeching me to go with her on pilgrimage to his shrine!"

"And it is likely that you'll consent," answered the doctor, to whom, just now, for the first time since he had been in love with her, Paula did not quite come up to the standard which a man sets up for the woman whom he adores. Hitherto he had seen nothing in her but what was noble and high-minded; but her last words had had in them the ring of sharp and indignant sarcasm—and according to Philippus sarcasm, that is to say censure, that was intended to wound and not to correct the faults of its object, was unworthy of a noble-minded woman. The mocking laugh with which she had ended her speech, appealing to him as though confident of victory, had revealed a wide chasm between her views and his own. He did not conceal from himself that he was of coarser, commoner mold than Paula, and probably gave vent to ridicule oftener than was right. Hitherto this habit of his had been displeasing to her, and he had liked it as corresponding to the ideal which reigned in his heart of woman, and now she herself resorted to sarcasm, and it did not come from her lips playfully, but as the passionate outflow of a deeply perturbed spirit, and this perception filled the student of human nature with regret, and at the same time awakened solicitude on his part.

Paula saw that her last words disconcerted him, and felt that his saying, "Perhaps you will do her that pleasure," had a deeper significance. "Men," thought she, "get angry when they have expressed an opinion and we women, unconvinced, advance another," and because she would not by any means disoblige the friend to whom she owed so much, she said, kindly:

"I can not entirely agree with you in descrying such brilliant promise in the future. Thank God, through your goodness and circumspection, every link has been snapped that bound me to the son of my poor uncle. Let us speak of something else; we have already wasted too much breath upon him."

"You echo my sentiment," observed the doctor. "As for the rest, I pray you to forget that 'perhaps' of mine. I am a man of the present, and no prophet, but I foresee that Orion will sacrifice everything, cost what it will, to—"

"Well?"

"To make friends with you again, and obtain your pardon, touch your heart, persuade you—"

"Let him try it!" cried Paula, lifting her right hand in a threatening manner.

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"And supposing that, gloriously gifted as he is in every respect, he should recover himself, and come forth like refined gold, a man worthy of the approval of the best—"

"Then I should never, never forget his crime, and the wrong he did me. Think you that I have already forgotten your conversation with Nephoris? You ask of your friends only a good disposition, corresponding to your own, and what then repels me from Orion save his disposition? Your ways of acting have altered thousands, but—answer me candidly—have they ever changed what we understand by the disposition?"

"Even so," replied the surgeon, with deep earnestness; "that, too, is capable of change. Or will you range yourself on the side of the merchant and his fellow believers of the Moslem creed, who consider man as the trap-ball of a blind destiny? In the opinion of our divines, regeneration, as they term it, can change, obviate, and bring to good the evil that comes into the world with us. But, in the turmoil of life, who succeeds in dying unto sin in their sense, to die, as it were, while living, in order to rise up as a new man? The garment of penitence does not fit the form of an Orion; yet there is another chance for him in finding again the path that he has forsaken. Until now fate has presented to its darling so much that was delightful, that, for mere enjoyment and gratitude, he found no time to consider life itself. Now, it shows to him its serious side, now challenges him to reflect, and if he finds a friend to repeat to him what my father taught me in a letter, left behind him for the perusal of his only little boy, and he consents to listen, then I consider him as saved."

"And how runs this advice?" asked Paula, with intense interest.

"Briefly thus: "Life is no meal served up for our enjoyment by Providence, but a service upon which we must expend our best force. Let each one test his nature and endowments, and the better he will succeed in using them for the weal of the whole body, as a member of which he came into the world, the higher will rise his inward bliss, the more surely will he attain to serenity of soul, the fewer terrors will death offer to him. In the consciousness of having scattered seed for the future, like a faithful householder on the evening of each day, he closes his eyes at the end of the last hour allotted him on earth. If Orion recognizes this, and determines not to shirk the duty imposed upon him by existence, but now for the first time dedicates his strength to it right earnestly, then the day will come when I myself shall look upon him with respect, yes,

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admiration. The shipwreck of which the merchant spoke has come. Let us see how he will breast the waves and deport himself, after being dashed upon the strand."

"Let us see," repeated Paula, "and wish that he may find the good adviser! As I listened to you, there came over me a sense of obligation to perform that part. But no, no! He has himself sapped the roots of a compassion that I might bestow upon an enemy after so terrible a blow as this. He, he —nothing is or shall he be to me, until the end of time. I have to thank you for opening to me this haven of peace. Help me to banish hence everything inimical that approaches to disturb my repose herein. If Orion ventures, with whatsoever design, to effect an entrance into this house, by force or stealth, then I rely upon you, my friend and my deliverer!"

So saying she offered Philippus her hand, and while he clasped it, his heart swelled with renewed tenderness, and he cried, joyfully:

"Every power at my command is yours. Depend upon that, and if you could reciprocate the devoted love of a plain, faithful man—"

"No further; no, no, Philippus!" interposed Paula, with distressful eagerness. Fast leagued together let us be as friends, as brother and sister."

"As brother and sister?" repeated he, disconsolately, with a melancholy smile. "Oh, yes, beautiful, beautiful is friendship. And yet—let me speak—I had dreamed of love, the surging sea of passion, here, here within I have felt and still feel its waves— But man, man—" and so saying he pressed his fist to his forehead. "Fool! have you forgotten the image shown you by your mirror, know you no more that you are a rough, coarse fellow, that the glowing flower after which you strive—"

Again Paula drew near to the friend before whose stormy impatience she had retreated, and while she courageously grasped his hand, she cried, pleadingly:

"Not so, Philippus, my dear, precious, only friend! The glowing flower which you ask for I can not give to you or any one else! I possess it no longer; for, when it had once bloomed, reckless feet came and crushed it. Do not rate the reflection in your mirror; do not call yourself a coarse fellow. Just as you are, the best and fairest might be proud of your love. Am I not, shall I not always be, proud of your friendship?"

"Friendship, friendship!" repeated he, passionately, wrenching away his hand from her's. "This burning, longing heart thirsts after other feelings! Oh, woman, woman! I know

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the wretch who trampled upon that flower of flowers in your heart, and I am a fool for becoming his eulogist, his defender, and—whatever it may cost—shall be again, so long as you—Perhaps the glowing flower will strike forth new roots into the soil of hatred, and I, the wretch who watered them, shall stand by as witness."

Once more Paula seized both the surgeon's hands, and cried out in unaffected anguish:

"I implore, I beseech you to cease this! How can I live peacefully here, without offending against propriety—as delicacy teaches every maiden to be shocking—under the same roof and in constant association with you, if you overstep the bounds of firm, true friendship? I am a forlorn girl, and would despair and give myself up for lost, if I did not believe that I might be self-sustaining. Be satisfied with what I can offer you, friend, and God will reward you for it! Let us both remain worthy of the esteem which, Heaven be thanked, we heartily feel for one another."

Greatly agitated, the doctor bowed down to her, and with difficulty mastering himself, pressed her white hand to his lips, and while he was doing this, Perpetua entered the room with the treasurer.

This honest officer was a slight man, not tall, nor yet short, not old nor yet young, with a refined and intelligent countenance, pale, careworn, and seamed by hard work and responsibility. He cast a quick, steady glance upon the two, and then lay down before Paula a considerable sum of money in gold coins. His young master sent it, in accordance with the will of his deceased father, for her first needful expenditures; the remaining larger share of her property, together with a statement of her account, would be paid over to her after the funeral of the Mukaukas.

Nilus could even now give her an approximate idea of what her fortune would be, and it proved to be so considerable that Paula could not trust her ears.

She now saw herself relieved from any anxiety as to a support, yes, so well provided for that she would have been justified in maintaining some state.

The physician had been a witness to this conversation, and he was sorely disturbed at it. The thought of being everything to the poor orphan Paula, and being permitted to protect her against want, had made him so happy!

The retreat which he had procured for her, and everything else that she needed, he had been ready to take upon himself,

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and now it appeared that she was not only more noble in station, but richer than he was himself.

It seemed to him as if Orion's deputy had robbed him of life's sweetest joy, and after he had conducted Paula to her worthy old host and his family, with bowed head, he left the house of Rufinus.

When the time came for going to rest, Perpetua was again permitted to undress her dear mistress; but Paula found no sleep, and next morning when she joined her new friends, she said to herself, that here, if anywhere, was the place where she might regain her lost peace of mind, but that she must fight many a battle, and wander a long way ere she could attain unto it.

CHAPTER XVII.

LITTLE MARIA.

At the same time as she, Orion had returned to his apartments. Adjoining them was the chamber of little Maria, whom he had not seen again since he had left his father's chamber of death. He knew that she lay there ill of fever, but he could not get his own consent to ask after her. Did he happen to think of her involuntarily he clinched his fists. Shattered in spirit, despairing, beside himself, capable of no other thought than that he was the most miserable of all miserable people, that he was pursued by his father's curse, that nothing could atone for the past, that a rude, inapproachable power had made his truest friend an enemy, and that there was no possibility of becoming reconciled, of moving her to utter one forgiving word, or bestow upon him a friendly look, sometimes he paced the spacious apartment from end to end, and then again would throw himself on the floor, in front of the divan, and bury his glowing countenance in its soft cushions. Occasionally he felt the impulse to pray, but speedily desisted, for, was there a power in heaven or upon earth that could open again that eye now closed in death, or again set that petrified heart to beating, or give speech to that palsied tongue, and grant to him, the outcast, that after which his soul panted, without which he felt as if he must perish, viz., his father's forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness!"

Then again, as though beside himself, he would beat upon his breast and forehead with his fist, at the same time uttering loud cries of anguish, imprecations and laments.

About midnight—just twelve hours had elapsed since that

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dreadful event, and it seemed to him like so many days—he flung himself down upon the divan and uttered a groan so loud that, in the stillness of the night, he was terrified at himself, and seized with pangs of compassion and dismay at his own grief. He turned his face to the wall, in order to shut out from his eyes the full, pure moonlight that merely showed him things that he did not want to see, and that gave him pain.

His tortures began to transgress the limits of the bearable. How torn and mangled seemed his own soul! and he was tempted to seize his sharpest sword, and put an abrupt end to this unbearable, overwhelming sorrow, as the fierce Ajax and Cato had done before.

With a quick movement he started up; for—there was no optical illusion, no mistake about it—the door of his room had softly opened, and a white form entered it with inaudibly light and ghost-like steps.

A cold shudder ran over the frame of the brave man, but the very next minute he recognized little Maria in his nocturnal visitor.

Noiselessly she drew near to him in the clear moonlight, but he called out to her sternly:

"What means this? What do you want?"

Then the child shrunk back, stood still tremblingly, imploringly stretched out her hands to him and timidly stammered:

"I heard you keep on grieving. Poor, poor Orion! And it is I who have brought all this upon you. I could not stay any longer in bed, there—yes, I had to—"

Here sobs interrupted her, but Orion called out to her:

"That will do! Go back to your room and sleep; I'll try not to groan so loud."

These last words sounded less harsh; for he remarked that the child, although sick, had come to him with bare feet and night robe shaking from cold, excitement, and sobbing; but Maria did not stir, only shaking her head, and making rejoinder while she wept softly all the while:

"No, no, I stay here and do not stir before I know that you —oh, oh! can you not forgive me? but I must tell you about it, I must—"

So saying, obeying a sudden impulse she ran straight up to him, flinging her arms around his neck and nestling her head upon his bosom, and as he did not immediately repulse her, she kissed his cheeks and brow.

Then a strange feeling came over him; he did not himself know how it came about, but his soul melted within him, and

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the moisture with which his eyes and face were bedewed came not only from the child's tears but his own.

So passed some long, silent moments; but at last he loosened the little one's clasping arms, and exclaimed:

"How hot your hands and cheeks are, poor thing! You have fever, and you'll take cold, through this folly—for the night wind is very chilly."

With difficulty had he restrained his tears; and while he gasped out these words he flung the black mantle, that he had thrown aside, solicitously about her, and then said, kindly:

"Be quiet now, and I, too, will try to compose myself. Assuredly you meant no harm; and I bear you no grudge for it. Go now, you can pass through the antechamber without danger from the draught. Well, are you going?"

"No, no," answered she, eagerly, "you must let me finish what I have to say, or else I can not sleep. You see, I never thought of doing you a mischief, of bringing you into such dreadful trouble; no, never! I had been angry with you before, because you—but then, dear me, then really I was not thinking of you at all, but only of poor Paula. You do not know how good she is; and grandfather used to love her so dearly before you came back, and there he lay, about to die soon, and I knew that he held Paula for a thief and a liar, and to see him close his eyes in such an error and such injustice seemed to me then a thing so unspeakably dreadful, not only for grandfather's sake, but Paula's, that I—oh, Orion, our merciful Saviour is my witness, that I— And though it had been my death I could not have done otherwise then—it would have killed me to keep silence."

"And perhaps it is as well that you did speak," interposed the young man, heaving a deep sigh. You see, my little girl, your dead father's brother is a lost man, and it matters little about him; but Paula, who is a thousand times better than I, at least you caused justice to be done her; and because I love her much more dearly than such a little one as you can understand, I shall gladly make friends with you again; yes, love you better than ever. This is nothing magnanimous and meritorious, for I need love, a great deal of love, to make life endurable. Fool that I am, I trifled away the best love, and now I am pleased to have yours, and would not willingly miss it! So, there's my hand upon it; give me one more kiss, and then go to bed and to sleep."

But Maria would not heed him as yet, only thanking him impetuously, and then asked, with beaming eyes:

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"So you really loved Paula, did you?" But here she stopped suddenly and exclaimed: "And little Catharine—"

"Never mind about that, child," said he, with a sigh, "and take a lesson for your own use from all this. You see, in a giddy hour I committed a wrong, and to hide it I had to commit another, until it grew mountain-high, fell back upon me and crushed me. Now, I am the most wretched of men, and perhaps might have been the happiest. Through my own levity, my own weakness and crime, I have ruined my whole life. I have lost Paula, who was dearer to me than all the rest of the world put together. Yes, Maria, could she have become mine, your poor uncle would have been the most enviable of men and a worthy, energetic one to boot; but as it is, 'gone is gone.' Go to rest, child; when you are older you'll understand all this!"

"Oh, I understand it now; and much better, may be, than you think!" exclaimed the ten-year-old child. "And if you really love Paula so, why should she not return your love? You are so handsome, you know so much, everybody likes you, and Paula, I know, would smile on you, if only— If you will not be angry, I'll tell you."

"Tell on, little simpleton."

"She can not bear any ill will against you, when she learns how frightfully you have suffered on her account, and that you are so kind-hearted and only once did—you know what! Before you came back, grandfather used to say a hundred times what a lifelong joy you were going to bring him; and now, now— You are my uncle, and I am only a silly little thing; but this I know, that it will fare with you like the prodigal son in the Bible. Grandpapa and you parted in anger just through overhastiness."

"He cursed me," said Orion, in a hollow tone.

"No, no! Not one of his last words escaped me. Only your deed he condemned with terrible words, and thrust you away from his couch."

"Where's the difference; cursed or thrust away?"

"Oh, a very great one! He had reason to be angry with you; but the prodigal son in the Bible was his father's best beloved, and he killed for him the fatted calf and pardoned him everything, and so will my grandfather do to you in heaven, when you are good again, as you used to be to him and to us all. And Paula will pardon you, too. I know her—you will soon see—Catharine loved you too, but she—dear me! she is almost as childish as I am; and if you are only friendly with her all the time and make her some right pretty present, she

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will find it all right. She deserves punishment for her false witness, and her's is not to be compared with yours."

These words from the mouth of an innocent child fell as sweetly upon the perturbed spirit of the desperate young man as dew upon the meadows in time of drought. He was still meditating upon them long after Maria had found rest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FUNERAL OF THE MUKAUKAS.

THE funeral services of the Mukaukas George took place on the third day after his death. Since the clergy had prohibited the old heathenish fashion of making mummies, and the burning of the dead also had been discontinued in the time of the Antonines, soon after their departure, the deceased had to be lowered into the ground: only the most distinguished people were embalmed and deposited in churches or chapels endowed for the purpose.

Conformably to his own direction the corpse of the Mukaukas George was to be conveyed to Alexandria and buried there beside his father in St. John's Church, but the carrier-dove that had borne to the patriarch the tidings of the governor's death had come back with the message that obstacles opposed themselves to the gratification of this wish on the part of the deceased, and that meanwhile his corpse must be laid in the family vault at Memphis.

In the memory of man no similar funeral procession had been seen there. Even the Moslem governor of the land, the great General Amr, had come over from the other bank of the Nile with his chief officers, civil and military, in order to pay the last honors to the highly esteemed and just governor. Their sinewy, brawny shapes and handsome self-contained countenances, their golden helmets and shirts of mail studded with precious stones, booty from the conquest of the Persian Empire and Syria, their splendid, richly caparisoned chargers and the nobility of their bearing had made a great impression upon the multitude. In slow and dignified manner had they come, like a tempest-driven storm-cloud had they sped away. From the cemetery they had dashed homeward along the Nile street, and then over the bridge of boats with the clanking of spurs and rattling of hoofs. From the white clouds of dust enveloping them had flashed forth the lightning of fiery glances, and their golden armor glittered in the sunlight.

Yes, each one of those knights, equalling a proud prince, it

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could not be hard to them to annihilate the mightiest empire in the world.

Men and women, all had timidly admired them, but most of all the heroic form and dark, handsome, manly countenance of General Amr and the son of the deceased, who, at his command, had ridden forth by his side from the governor's palace in morning garb, on a jet black, high-bred steed.

The handsome youth and the glorious, powerful man formed a pair from which the women unwillingly turned their eyes. Both appeared alike distinguished in bearing and perfect in form, both equally dexterous in curbing the impatience of their steeds, and both seemed born to command. A more powerful impression was made upon many a Memphite by the gracefully poised head, clear cut eagle nose, and dark, glowing eyes of the renowned general than by the more symmetrical features and flowing locks of the governor's son, that last representative of the oldest and proudest family in all Egypt.

Proudly and haughtily the Arabian looked straight before him, and the young man's fixed gaze was similarly directed, and yet a few times he turned his head around in order to survey the mourning multitude. When he discovered Paula among the women following the corpse a look of joy illumined his pale countenance, and his cheeks flushed slightly; the outlook in front had furrowed his brow and lent so sinister an expression to his features that many a citizen whispered to his neighbor "that gay, affable young man is going to turn out a severe ruler."

What was exciting his indignation had not escaped either his illustrious companion or the multitude.

He alone knew that the patriarch had interdicted the transference of his father's mortal remains to Alexandria; but everybody remarked the singularly small attendance of the Memphis clergy at this funeral. Only Bishop Plotinus, with the learned and courageous presbyter John were there with a few chorister boys, who bore a crucifix, chanting in front of the hearse, drawn by six fiery steeds, upon which the costly sarcophagus was carried to the cemetery in accordance with an old usage.

Before this, all dismounted from their horses, and barefooted runners in the service of the Arabs were at hand to hold the horses.

At the grave the bishop spoke warm words of eulogy which were followed by wretchedly executed and feeble singing on the part of the choristers, when the multitude, many thousand strong, took up the dirge themselves and sent forth such a

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loud and mighty wail as had hardly ever before resounded through this church-yard. The remaining ceremonies—the clergy being absent to whom their conduct properly belonged—were quickly and imperfectly dispatched.

General Amr, whose falcon eyes nothing escaped, immediately observed what was lacking here, and called out to Orion, in a tone so loud and inconsiderate that his remark was heard afar off:

"The dead is now paying the penalty of what the living, as a wise man, did for the good of his country in conjunction with us Moslems."

"By order of the patriarch," returned Orion, his voice trembling as he spoke, and the veins in his forehead swelling with anger. "But by my father's soul," and here he shook his clinched fist, "if there is a just God, Benjamin will not succeed in shutting the door of heaven against the bravest of the brave."

"We carry the key to ours in our own girdles," replied the general, smiling in a self-satisfied manner, and tapping his broad chest, while he cast a friendly glance upon the young man. "Come and see me Saturday, young man; I want to talk with you! Toward sundown I'll expect you over at my house. If I am not back before dark, you will have to wait for me."

So saying Amr seized his horse's mane and vaulted into the saddle like any youth before Orion could tender his assistance, although he was full fifty years old. As soon as he was mounted he gave his men the signal for departure.

Not a word of what had passed between the two men escaped Paula, who, with the Lady Nephoris, stood close by the open family vault. Pale as he had been, clad in costly but plain and flowing garments, as he had just appeared in his righteous indignation, nobody could deny that these last days had wrought a mighty change in the misguided young man. After Paula had led the pale, woe-begone widow to her carriage and then gone home alone with Perpetua, she was pursued by the image of the handsome, wrathful man as he had stood there appealing to the justice of God.

It had not escaped her that he had observed her as she stood opposite to him beside the open vault, and although she had succeeded well in avoiding his glance, at the same time her weak heart had throbbed so violently that she could still feel its pulsations, and she had not succeeded in concentrating her thoughts upon the dear deceased, as was right.

So far Orion had neither approached her peaceful asylum

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himself, nor sent an envoy to her to commit her property into her hands, and she found this a matter of course, for she needed no one to tell her how many demands were made upon his time at this season.

Although before the funeral she had been firmly determined to decline his visit, and empowered her nurse to receive her property at his hands, such conduct, after the interment no longer appeared seemly to her; yes, out of deference for the memory of the deceased, she deemed it her duty not to repulse Orion if he should come to her seeking forgiveness.

And she owed her uncle another thing. She wanted to be the one who, in accordance with Philippus's idea, should point out life to his son as an office, a service, and should he open his heart to this admonition then—no—even then all must be over between them—dead—completely dead—as fire on a sunken raft, as a soap bubble that has burst, as a musical note that has died away.

And this admonition that she wanted to have given to the man whom she had once looked up to so highly! What gave her the right to impart it to him? Had he not looked like a man fully capable of directing and carrying out his own aims in life? Her heart pined after him, all that was in her longed to behold him again, once more to hear his voice; and this longing desire she called duty, confounding it with the gratitude which she owed the deceased.

Wholly absorbed in these deliberations and doubts, she hardly heard a word of what the garrulous Perpetua was saying as she walked along by her side.

The old woman could not content herself with such funeral solemnities; for everything had been different from the funerals usually conducted at Memphis. No priests, a retinue of horsemen, mourners, the dead man's own son among them, riding too, although everybody knew that custom required their going afoot! A pitiful screeching of miserable boys at the grave of such a man, and then that stentorian chorus from the throats of a thousand vulgarians; why it was like to split the drum of her ear! However, she could stand that last, for the Memphites had done it out of reverence for the deceased! This thought even touched her faithful heart and drove the tears to her eyes, but at the same time roused her indignation, for had she not seen common people buried in a more solemn manner and with more imposing ceremonies than the great, good Mukaukas, who had endowed the Church so splendidly too. Yes, these Jacobites! Nobody else could have acted so ungratefully; such a crime only their heretical chief could

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have committed. In St. Cecilia's Convent, it was known from the abbess down to the youngest novice that the patriarch had notified the bishop, through a carrier dove, that the clergy were not to participate in the funeral services. Good Plotinus had been much wrought up by this command, and yet it had not been in his power to counteract it, although he would follow the coffin in person himself, and did not deter the presbyter from accompanying him. For that matter, young Master Orion did not look at all as if he meant to let this insult to his father go unpunished. But whose arm is long enough to reach to the patriarchal see? Except—but no, that can not be possible; at the bare thought of it cold chills ran over her. But yet, still— How very affably that great general from over yonder had spoken with him! Heavenly Father! If he, like so many unprincipled Egyptians, should abjure the holy Christian religion and accept the teachings of the lying prophet of the Arabs! It was tempting, to be sure, for profligate men, who could take into their houses half a dozen or more wives, without being chargeable with sin. A gentleman like Mr. Orion could support them, for the abbess had said how the whole world regarded the great Mukaukas as a very wealthy man, and the head clerk of the city even could not compute the sum of his immense riches. Yes, yes, God's dispensations are unsearchable. Why should He smother one under a shower of gold, while to many poor folks He does not give enough to still the pangs of hunger!

At the close of this effusion the women reached home, and here for the first time Paula breathed freely. Away, away with that passion, be it hate or love, that was forever striving for dominion over her! Not until all was past between Orion and herself, and the last tie broken that bound her to the governor's mansion, could she rightly enjoy her new freedom and tranquil happiness in that beautiful home, for which she had to thank the forethought of the doctor.

Dared she then ask more than the present offered her?

She had gilded into a true haven of repose, where nothing was lacking that she needed, according to Philippus's admonitory discourse. Here were good people who appreciated her, many a thing that she was fitted to do, and that chimed in with her inclinations, and moreover, rich opportunity for sowing and reaping affection. Besides this, a short and shady walk brought her to the convent, where, among pious professors of her own faith, she could daily attend the worship of God, as she had been accustomed to do in her childhood. She had felt a great longing for such spiritual food, and how fully could it be sup-

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plied now by the old abbess, the widow of a noble patrician from Constantinople, who had known her parents. How gladly the vigorous old lady told of the goodness and regal beauty of that mother, who had died so early in giving her life! She could pour out her sorrows into the bosom of this matron, for she treated her as a dear daughter given to her in her old age.

And her hosts! What kind, good people they were, and right remarkable too in their way! She had not dreamed that there could be such queer and, at the same time such amiable creatures in existence!

There was old Rufinus, in the first place, a hale, hearty old graybeard, who, with his snow-white hair and long, flowing beard, put one in mind partly of the apostle John, partly of a warrior grown gray in conflict. What a tender, loving heart he had in spite of his occasional brusqueness of manner! In obligatory intercourse with his fellow men, when his views clashed with their's, he showed himself waggish and good-tempered. She had never met a sweeter spirit nor one of sincerer character, and could well understand how it must rile and vex such a person, to be obliged, day in and day out, to be, at least in seeming, something different from what he really was. He, too, belonged to her Church, allowing his wife and daughter to attend worship in the convent, and nevertheless having to appear himself to be a Coptic Christian, and make it convenient to repair, with his family, on certain holidays, to the Jacobite Church, whose plain forms of worship were not at all to his taste.

Rufinus's property sufficed for a comfortable subsistence for himself and his, and nevertheless, in his fashion, he was busy from morning till night; since, however, his occupations not only brought in nothing, but made draughts upon his treasury, everybody knew him to be a man of fortune, and, so soon as he had been recognized for a Melchite by one of the patriarch's spies, this circumstance would have brought upon him persecution, exile and evidently the confiscation of his goods. It was necessary, then, to be prudent, and if the old man could have only found a purchaser for his house and garden in a city where there were ten times as many buildings standing empty as there were occupied ones, he would long since have decamped, in order to seek a new home for himself and his dear ones.

Most elderly people of quick impulses and not too ready wits, need a catchwood to serve as a trigger or rest for thought, and he was fond of using thus two sayings, one of which was: "As

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surely as man is the measure of all things," and the other, referring to his house: "As certainly as I would like to be rid of this rattle-trap." This rattle-trap, by the may, consisted of a well built, very spacious dwelling house, with a garden, that in former days would have commanded a high price, on account of its proximity to the water. Shortly before the invasion of Egypt by the Arabs he had, to be sure, bought it for a song, and that indeed—so swiftly do times alter—from a Jacobite Christian who had been forced into sudden flight by Cyrus, who was patriarch then, and a Melchite, because he had succeeded in converting the orthodox slaves in his employ to his creed.

Dr. Philippus had induced his accomplished and experienced friend to come to Memphis, and he stood faithfully by him, and the two were coadjutors in their work.

The wife of Rufinus, a gentle, delicate-looking little woman, with her thin, somewhat sunken face, must have been highly attractive and lovely once upon a time, and might have been taken for his daughter now, seeing that she was full twenty years his junior.

It was obvious that she must have had some bitter experiences in life, but they had been patiently endured and eventuated in good. Her husband had occasioned her the greatest care and anxiety by his restlessness, and yet she sacrificed everything to his pleasure. She contrived to remove every hinderance, every discomfort from his path, and, with wondrous instinct she divined what would conduce to his comfort and enjoyment. The doctor declared that her stooping gait and the searching glance of her quick, merry black eyes came from her perpetual spying upon the blade of grass that might penetrate the callous heel of the pedestrian, and expose Rufinus to danger.

"To save time," their daughter Pulcheria was commonly called "Pul," when the old man did not prefer to call her "My poor child."

There was generally something compassionate in Rufinus's address to his daughter; for seldom did he look at her without asking himself what would become of this beloved being, if he, who was so much older, should close his eyes and his Johanna speedily follow him to the grave. And Pulcheria, who saw her mother care for her father to such a degree that nothing was left for herself to do for him, deemed herself the most superfluous creature in the world, and yet, at any time she would have been ready to die for her parents, the abbess, their faith, for the doctor, and now for Paula too, although their

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acquaintance was of only two days' standing. Nevertheless she was a very pretty, well-grown girl, with large, beautiful eyes, beaming with sensibility and candor, while her magnificent head of auburn hair had not its parallel in all Egypt. Her father had long been cognizant of her desire to enter the Convent of St. Cecilia as a novice and future sick-nurse, but, although he had himself felt a similar drawing all his life, he had several times refused his consent in the most positive manner, for he would soon go to his father's, and then her mother, so long as she survived him, would have nobody else left to coddle.

Just now Pul cared less than usual about taking the veil, for she had found in Paula a being in whose presence she indeed might feel herself small, but to whom her guileless soul, with its lofty aspirations, looked up with delight and satisfaction. Moreover, there were now patients in their own house to be nursed, viz., Hassan, the wounded Masdakite, and the Persian slave. The further treatment of these two outside of her house had been gladly committed to the doctor by the Lady Nephoris, who had been stunned, as it were, by the frightful scene at her husband's death-bed, and apart from all the claims of life, dwelt solely on memories of the deceased.

On the evening after Paula's arrival, the physician had entered into negotiations with his friend, concerning the accommodation of his new guests, and when the question of compensation was raised, the old man had expressed himself with animation, to the following purport:

"They are all welcome. If they have wounds we'll heal them, if their heads are turned we'll screw them round straight, and if their souls are dark we'll flood them with light. If the fair Damascus lady pleases to abide with us, she may stay here with her old nurse, so long as it suits her and us. We have bidden her welcome heartily, but the privilege of saying farewell—do you hear—must be as free to us as to her! One never knows how he'll get along with these fine folk, and as surely as I want to be rid of my rattle-trap, I might take it into my head some day to pick up my staff again and leave it to the owls and jackals. You know me! We are done now with the question of so-called compensation. A full purse hangs at the back of the sick, and the well one has more than she knows what to do with. You decide the amount, but as regards the women—I am in earnest—make it a liberal one! You know for what I need Mammon, and it will be pleasant too for my Joanna to have to twist and turn less anxiously in the management of her household affairs. Besides, the Damas-

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cus lady will feel more comfortable with us, if she is beholden to us for nothing. It is not seemly that the daughter of Thomas, like some bird of passage, should have to retire nightly with a "Thank you" upon her lips. If each one pays his way then we are on equal ground, and if one shows the other any particular affection, it is not stifled by weight of obligation; it retains its value and gives mutual gratification."

"Amen!" had the doctor responded, and Paula had been well pleased with her friend's arrangements.

The very next day she felt already like a member of the household, although she must have encountered things hourly that must have struck her as strange.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAIR FOES MAKE FAST FRIENDS.

After the funeral was over and Paula had dined with Rufinus and his family — no persuasions would induce the nurse to sit at table with her mistress—she went into the garden with the old man and Pul. The sun was already low in the heavens, yet its parting light enhanced the brilliancy of the flowers and the satin-like sheen of the foliage of such tropical plants as had not yet been burned up by heat and drought. A humpbacked bullock with mottled hide and an ass turned the wheel which drew up fresh water from the Nile, emptying it into a great cistern, whence it was conducted into little canals that irrigated the cultivated ground on both sides. This work was now toilsome; for the river had fallen to a degree that must have caused solicitude, even at the season when the water was lowest.

The various birds of ruffled plumage that swung freely in the air, suspended from the limbs of trees in little cages, some with their legs spliced and others with heads hanging sadly down, secure thus from the cat's claws or the attacks of other foes, were going to roost, and Rufinus addressed an endearing word to each, or chirped cheerily to it with his lips.

A spicy fragrance and genuine rural quiet pervaded the garden, everything, even the backs of the negro drawer of water and the bullock with his yellow-flecked hide, glimmered in the golden sunlight, and the shady grove of St. Cecilia's Convent vibrated to the pure song of the choir of nuns.

Pulcheria hearkened to it, turning her head in that direction, with her arms crossed upon her bosom, and her father, pointing her out to Paula, said, softly:

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"There is where her heart is. May she always thus have a single eye for the glory of God; what is woman without religion, and yet here below it stands good that everything upon earth must be done for one's neighbor out of love to the Most High! Can our just Father in heaven really wish that brother forsake brother, and, in our case, the child its parents, to do Him honor?"

"Assuredly not," answered Paula. "As for me, the hope of finding my lost father again is the only thing that deters me from taking the veil, and like your Pulcheria, I have often longed after the peace of the cloister. But how devout and wrapt your daughter looks! What a lovely, touching spectacle! The whole world looked so dark and gloomy before me, but already, since I have been with you, things look brighter, and I am sure that I'll find here, if anywhere, what I lost over there. Happy child! As she sits there in the sunset glow, does it not seem as if there radiated from her some of the pure spirit of piety with which she is filled? Did I not fear to disturb her, and felt worthy of it, I would love to unite my prayers with her's!"

"You are having a share in them without that," smiled the old man. "At this instant her St. Cecilia quite certainly bears your features. Let us question her, and we shall see."

"No, let her alone!" implored Paula, blushing and drawing Rufinus away with her to the other side of the garden.

Soon they had reached the spot, where a high fence of thorny growth parted the old man's land from the widow Susannah's. Here Rufinus pricked up his ears and exclaimed, with annoyance:

"As surely as I would like to be rid of this rattle-trap, they are cutting at my hedge again! Yesterday evening only I caught one of the slaves over yonder whacking at the boughs, and yet I could not get at the black villain through the thorns. Evidently they are preparing a peep-hole for some curious person or spy, for the patriarch knows how to take advantage of the petticoat. But I'll catch them! Go away, please, as though you had seen and heard nothing; I'll fetch my whip."

So saying, the old man quickly moved off, and Paula was about to follow him, but hardly had he disappeared ere she heard her name called by a woman's voice, through the opening in the hedge, and as she looked around, there appeared in the gap, which had been forcibly made in the bushes the day before by a man's hand, the head of a pretty girl that was, as it were, framed in a wreath of green.

Even in the twilight she recognized it, and as Catharine

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thrust her head further forward and earnestly called out to her. "May I come over and see you, will you listen to me?" she gave a kindly assent. Then the nimble creature, without availing herself of the help of Paula's hand, which was extended to her, sprung so lightly through the opening that it was plain to see she had not been long out of practice in playing such pranks in her games with Maria. Quick as the wind she was on her feet again, spreading out her arms as if she would rush forward and embrace the young lady, but again she let them drop, and took one step backward. Her embarrassment, however, did not escape Paula. Quickly she advanced to meet her, kissed her on her forehead, and exclaimed, cheerfully:

"A trespasser! Why do you not come through the open gate? Here is mine host already with his hippopotamus thong! Hold, hold, good Rufinus, for the breach which has been made in your living wall was not for the purpose of an attack upon you, but me! Here stands the inimical power, and I shall be much surprised if you do not recognize in her a neighbor."

"Recognize?" asked the old man, whose wrath had been easily appeased. "Do we know one another, young lady, or not? It is an open question."

"And yet," cried Catharine, "from the great tower I have seen you a hundred times."

"You will have had less joy than I, old fellow that I am, when I had the pleasure of meeting you. About a year ago we came nearest to meeting. I then had the pleasure of catching you in my great peach-tree, that even now takes the liberty of stretching its arms over into your garden-plot."

"I was but a child then," laughed Catharine, who remembered how the old gentleman (whom she had always admired, particularly with his beautiful white head) had surprised her in his tree, and with a pleasant nod had advised her to make herself at home there.

"A child," repeated Rufinus. But now we are grown up, are we not, and do not like to be so high any more, but humbly creep through our neighbor's hedge."

"Then you are really strangers to one another; is that so?" exclaimed Paula in astonishment. "And have you never met Pulcheria either, Catharine?"

"Pul?" asked the other. "Oh, how gladly would I have addressed her thus! A hundred times I was on the point of making her acquaintance; for one must be fond of her just from looking at her; but mother—"

"Well, what has your mother against her neighbor?" asked

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Rufinus. "I think we are quiet people who do not hurt anybody."

"No, no, God forbid! But mother has her own opinions about matters; you are still strangers, and because you are so seldom seen at church—"

"Therefore," smiled Rufinus, "she of course takes us for ungodly people. Only tell her that she is mistaken; and if Thomas's daughter is your friend, and you are visiting her—but prettily through the door and not through the hedge, for to-morrow that will be closely intertwined—then you will find that we have a great deal to do and many sick to tend—poor creatures, men, birds or beasts, as it happens; and people serve their God, too, if they alleviate the sorrows of his creatures, every one of which is dear to him. Tell this to your mother, and then come again often, Lady Humming-bird."

"Thank you! But, old gentleman, may I ask how you learned that nickname? I hate it."

"In the same way that you have found out that we call Pulcheria 'Pul,'" answered Rufinus, laughing as he bowed and retired, leaving the two girls alone.

"A dear old gentleman!" cried Catharine. "Oh, I know exactly how he passes his days! And his pretty wife and Pul, I know them all! How often have I spied upon them from over there. I'll show you the place some day! We can overlook the whole garden, only not what goes on at the convent on the other side of the house, or behind the trees. Mother, you know her—if she once imbibes a prejudice—but, Pul, do you know, I think she would be the very friend for me!"

"To be sure she would!" replied Paula. "A girl of your age needs a companion older than little Maria."

"Oh, you are not to say anything against her!" cried Catharine, eagerly. "She is only ten years old, but many a grown-up person is not so wise and discreet as she is. I have feared that in the last dark days."

"Poor child!" sighed Paula, stroking her hair softly.

Hereupon there suddenly burst a painful sob from Catharine's breast. Under Paula's address she sought to suppress it with all her might, but grief would have its way. So much overcome was she that she could not utter a single word until Paula led her to a seat under a far-spreading sycamore, constraining her with gentle force to sit down beside her, when she drew her caressingly to her side, speaking words of comfort and affection.

Numberless birds were going to roost in the thick foliage overhead, owls and bats were beginning their nightly expedi-

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tions, the firmament was adorning itself with its gold and silver stars; from the western part of the town was heard the barking of jackals that had found shelter among the ruinous houses, and at nightfall went forth in search of prey. In the mild evening air the dew began to fall noiselessly upon leaves, grass, and flowers, the blossoms in the garden emitted a much stronger perfume than by day, and Paula felt that it was time to seek protection against the mists that were ascending from the stream; but still she tarried until the little girl had completely unbosomed herself, pouring out into her ears the story of her woe and her repentance; what she never could make up for, and then what had happened to her that threatened to break her heart, and what nevertheless she now wanted to overcome and banish from her mind.

She told Paula how Orion had wooed her, how she loved him, how jealousy of her had tortured her poor heart, and how she had suffered herself to be misled and had testified falsely before the judges. Then she informed her friend that Maria had been the first one to show her the precipice on which she stood.

On the afternoon after the Mukaukas's death she had gone with her mother to the governor's palace in order to condole with their friends. She had first inquired after Maria, but had not been admitted to see her, for she was lying in bed ill of fever. Thereupon she had wanted to go into the cool chamber whence came the sound of her mother's voice. The tone of this was not sad but angry and passionate, hence she did not feel as if it would be proper to enter the room, and repaired to the colonnade opening upon the Nile. She wanted to avoid Orion by all means, and greatly dreaded meeting him; but she had no sooner entered the hall, which was still quite light, than she found him there—but how? There he sat utterly dejected, in black garments and with his head buried in his hands. Her entrance was not observed by him, and yet she felt such deep compassion for him. Although it was hot weather he trembled in every limb, and one shudder after another shook his powerful frame. Then she addressed him, hoping to speak words of comfort; but he had seemed shocked at it, and jumped up, shaking, tossing the tangled hair from his face, displaying a countenance so pale and desperate that again she shrunk from him in fear, and found no power to utter a single one of the consolatory phrases which had before been at her tongue's end. For a long time neither of them had uttered a syllable; meanwhile he had roused himself as if for a mighty effort, and slowly, with a solemn dignity, such as assuredly she had never

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before remarked in him, he had stepped up to her, laid his hand upon her shoulder, let his eyes rest upon her a long while, reddened as they were by much weeping, and then with a groan sighed forth:

"Unhappy child!"

The sound was still ringing in her ears, and his whole appearance was so different from what it had been that she would have taken him for an utter stranger. His voice, too, sounded unnatural and hollow as he then said, firmly and quietly:

"Child, child! Perhaps I have heedlessly brought sorrow into the life of many, yet I have done you the worst injury of all, for I have made you, an innocent, confiding creature, a companion in my guilt. The great sin that we have committed recoils upon me alone, and for its sake I have been chastised, have suffered a punishment too hard for hundreds, for thousands!"

"So saying," continued Catharine, "he again clapped his hands before his face, threw himself back upon the divan, sobbing and groaning. Then once more he jumped up and uttered a cry so passionate and loud that it seemed to me as if I must die of anguish and pity. "Pardon me if you can pardon me sincerely and fully; I need it; you must!'

"Then I felt like rushing up to him, embracing him, and forgiving him everything; for his great grief afflicted me so much; but he repelled me gravely, not roughly, and harshly though, saying, 'Let there be no more of love and betrothal between us.' He said that I was young, and would soon succeed in forgetting him. He would ever be a true friend to me and my mother, and the harder the thing we should ask of him the more joyfully would he serve us.

"Here I was about to answer him, but he interrupted me quickly, and said, gravely and decidedly:

"'Amiable as you are, I can not love you as you deserve; for—it is my duty to tell you—I have another great love in my heart, my first and last one, and if I have acted a base part once, it was only once, and I prefer to bear your resentment and distress you and myself now rather than to prolong this wrong-doing, deceiving you and the other one.'

"Hereupon I started up greatly shocked, and asked, 'Paula?' He did not answer me, however, bowed low before me, touched my forehead with his lips, as his father has often kissed me, and then walked off rapidly toward the garden.

"Now my mother came up to me, red as a poppy, and evidently much agitated. She silently caught me by the hand,

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drew me after her into our carriage, and there exclaimed, quite beside herself—she could not even weep for rage:

"'This insult, this unheard-of conduct! whence can I get the courage to tell you, my poor lamb—'

"And so she would have gone on; but I did not let her finish her sentence, telling her directly that I knew all, and at the same time succeeded in maintaining my composure. We had dreadful times at home, and when yesterday, after the opening of the will, Nilus came to us and presented me with that lovely little gold box set with turquoises and pearls which I had always admired so much, saying that the good Mukaukas George had left it to me by will, with his own handwriting upon it: 'For my bright little Catharine,' my mother insisted upon my not accepting it, and had it sent back to Nephoris despite my prayers and entreaties. Of course I am never again to visit at the governor's palace; indeed, my mother is talking of leaving Memphis altogether and taking me to reside in Constantinople or some other city where Christians rule. Then indeed our pretty, good house will have to be given away, but our dear glorious garden is to be sold to peasants, mother says. A year and a half ago it went just so with the beautiful palace of Memnon. Out of the garden they have made a corn-field, and the gorgeous lower halls, with their mosaics and pictures, have now become dirty stalls for cows and sheep, and hogs are fattened in the chambers of Hathor and Dorothea. Dear, dear! those two were my best friends! I am to have nothing more to do with Maria; mother does not now bestow a single kind word upon anybody, hardly even upon me; and my old nurse is as deaf as a post. Am I not a right poor, forsaken creature? And if you, you too turn me off, who is there in Memphis that I could trust to? But you will not be so hard-hearted, will you? Besides, it will not last long, for mother is in earnest about going away. To be sure, you are older and so much wiser and more prudent than I am—"

"I'll be a friend to you, my dear; but seek Pulcheria's companionship also."

"I would be delighted to! But there's mother! I would not mind being left so to myself if it were not— You have heard how Orion carried on with me that time in the avenue. He must have cared something for me then. What soft, sweet, names he gave me! Ah me! Nobody could treat a person so that he did not like! He is so rich himself that my property could not have had anything to do with it. And does he look at all like a man who would allow a girl to be forced on him by his mother? He has always been good to

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me, I think; but when he thought upon the lofty position that he would have to assume, then he found me too small and childish. Oh, how many tears have I shed already on account of being so ridiculously small! A mere humming-bird I am, and must be all the time. The old gentleman here called me so; and if a man like Orion wishes a grand-looking wife, I can not blame him for it. The other one, whom he loves more than me, is certainly tall, beautiful, majestic like you; and I always have said his future wife must look exactly like you. All is over between him and me, and I'll bear it tranquilly; but I must be allowed to believe that upon his return home he found me pretty and lovable, and so had a little bit of fancy for me. So it is, and so it has been too! But then he saw somebody else; and I could not compare myself with her. She was altogether such a woman as he needed, and this other, Paula, is certainly you, you and no one else; an inner voice tells me so? And, as you may well believe, this pains me but gives me pleasure at the same time. I would hate any other girl in the world to whom he would offer his hand; but if you are that other one, and if you will be his wife—"

"Nonsense!" interposed Paula, decidedly. "Only consider! Did Orion show himself my friend or my bitterest, most deadly enemy when he betrayed you into perjury?"

"Yes, certainly that time before the council you mean," and the little girl thoughtfully bent down her head. Soon, though, she lifted it again, looked determinedly into Paula's face, and with flashing eyes cried out, without any hesitancy whatever: "And you? In spite of everything, he is so handsome, so sensible, and so manly, that it can not be otherwise! You love him!"

Hereupon Paula loosened the arm with which Catharine held her embraced, and replied, openly:

"Until to-day at the funeral I hated and abhorred him, but at his father's sepulcher he appeared to me like a new man; and it was easy for me to forgive him there in silence."

"Then you do not love him?" asked Catharine, punching her little finger into her companion's plump arm.

Then Paula felt how icy cold was her hand, and started.

The moon had long since risen, the stars began to mount higher and higher, and with a short "Come!" she arose and said: "It can hardly lack one hour of midnight; your mother will be uneasy about you."

"An hour before midnight!" echoed the young girl, shocked. "Dear me, what a scolding I'll get! She is certainly still sitting at the backgammon board with Bishop Plotinus, as she

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does every evening. Farewell, then, for to-night! Through the hedge is the quickest way!"

"No!" objected Paula, positively. "You are no longer a child, but a young lady, and must act with decorum accordingly! Instead of bursting through the thorns go through the house door. I'll accompany you with Rufinus, and there explain to your mother—"

"No, no," vociferated Catharine. "She is as angry with you as with all the rest, and just yesterday forbade me—"

"To visit me?" asked Paula. "She believes—"

"That for your sake Orion— Yes, she preferred to lay the whole blame upon you. But I, now I have spoken with you— Do you see that light over yonder? It comes from her sitting-room."

And before Paula could hinder her, she ran up to the hedge and shot nimbly as a weasel through the breach in the thorny hedge.

Paula looked after her young friend with mingled feelings, and soon repaired to the house and to bed. Catharine's narration deprived her of sleep for a long while; and the suspicion, nay, well-nigh the certainty, that it was herself who had awakened "a great love" in the heart of Orion allowed her no rest for hours. And if it were she? Yes, then she had it in her power to take vengeance on the evil-doer and let him taste all the misery that he had prepared for her poor soul! And yet upon whom would such punishment inflict deeper wounds, him or herself? For had not Catharine's revelation made her heart thrill and opened to her a world of rapture? But no, no! To allow herself to be raised to heaven by a hand that had so pitilessly felled her to the earth was degradation and gross injustice to herself!

In the midst of this oscillation of thought and feeling slumber overcame her, and in the early morning she had a dream that haunted her with vague forebodings all of the next day.

Orion had come riding toward her, pale as death, in dark mourning robes, seated upon his jet-black charger, and without looking at her or speaking to her, who had lost all power of feeling, he had swung her on high as if she had been a child, and seated her before him on the horse's back. With all her might she had striven to slip from his grasp and reach the ground, but with both arms holding her as in an iron vise, he had withstood her efforts She would not have counted her life dear to escape from this embrace; but the more vehemently she struggled, the closer and tighter the dumb, pitiless rider drew her to himself. In front of them flowed the billowy

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waters of the river; but Orion did not seem to observe it, and without opening his lips composedly guided the horse up to it. Beside herself with anguish and affright, she now implored him to give another direction to the horse's steps; but he did not hear her, and in all tranquillity drove him into the midst of the flood. Then her horror reached its height; and as the horse drew her deeper and deeper into the water she voluntarily flung her arms around the rider's neck, and now the pallor left his face, his cheeks flushed, his lips sought and found hers; but in the midst of deadly anguish she felt a rapturous delight such as she had never tasted before. She would have been willing to ride on perpetually thus to ruin; deeper and deeper, in fact, did they go into the water, and she felt how it reached up to her own and his breast, but it troubled her not. No word had been exchanged between them; and yet all of a sudden she was moved to break the silence, and, as though it must be, she said:

"Am I the other one?"

Then dashing waves broke over her from all sides, a whirlpool had Orion, herself, and the horse in its grasp, whirling them around and around in its vortex, a soughing wind was whistling in her ears, and immediately afterward billows and waves, the rushing of the tempest, and howling of the hurricane, all, all around her shouted in one mighty overpowering chorus:

"You are!"

Only Orion remained silent; and as the whirlpool was ingulfing the horse, a wave tore her from his breast, and she sunk, and sunk, stretching her arms out to him longingly, and just then she started from her slumbers with beaded brow; and her nurse, who had aroused her from her unquiet dream, called to her, shaking her head:

"Child, child, what was it? You have been continually—at first in great anguish, and then tenderly, yes, believe me, tenderly—calling upon the name of Orion."

CHAPTER XX.

A FLAG OF TRUCE IS RAISED.

About noon the sweetest quiet reigned in the neat rooms prepared by Rufinus's wife for the accommodation of her sick guests. Sunlight shining through the thick green curtains produced the effect of soft twilight, and the nurses had, a short while before, partaken of their morning meal.

Paula was pouring some new drops upon the Masdakite's bandage, and in the adjoining room Pulcheria was busied with

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Mandana, who quietly and rationally submitted to the doctor's prescriptions without showing a trace of madness.

Paula was still under the spell of the past night. Such disquiet had taken possession of her, that, entirely contrary to her custom, she could not long sit still, and when Pul came to her about this and that she listened so abstractedly and unsympathetically that the modest child, out of dread of disturbing her, withdrew to her patients and waited there patiently until her new idol should call for her.

Indeed Thomas's daughter was well justified in giving way to a certain oppression of heart, for, if she were not altogether deceived, Orion would to-day call upon her as the bearer of her fortune. If on her way home from the cemetery yesterday she had said to herself that she must and would refuse to see him, she had been confirmed in this resolve by the deep excitement into which she had been thrown by Catharine's narration and her dream.

Her nurse was waiting for Orion down-stairs with orders to conduct him, not to her, but to Rufinus, who had cheerfully undertaken as her proxy to receive the money that she was expecting. For the doctor had not concealed from Paula that he had in general acquainted his friend with the circumstances causing her to leave the governor's palace, and designated Orion to him as a man whom she had good reason to avoid.

At two o'clock in the afternoon Paula's uneasiness had increased so much that now and then she left the sick-room that looked out upon the garden in order to take a view of Nile Street from the windows of the front hall; for he might come that way as well as from the other direction.

She did not think about the securing of her property; but the question arose in her mind as to whether she were not shirking a duty by evading the excitements incident to a personal interview with her uncle's son.

Nobody could give her advice on this point, not even Perpetua; for hardly a mother could quite understand her in this affair.

She hardly recognized herself any longer; for hitherto, even in the most difficult situations, without long reflection, taught only by an infallible inner voice, she had instantly known what to do or leave undone in any given case; and yet to-day she reminded herself of a wavering reed, of a leaf blown hither and thither, and as often as she clinched her teeth and doubled up her fist to aid her faculties in settling the pros and cons, her thoughts roved afar again and again, and the recollection of her dream, Orion's image as she had seen it at his father's

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grave, Catharine's talk of "the other one," and the frightful punishment which he would have to undergo and had already actually suffered, all that crossed her brain as a flock of birds flitting and hovering over the Nile had often spread, as it were, a fluttering curtain between her eye and its aim on the opposite shore.

At three o'clock in the afternoon—she had again returned to the patient—she thought she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and again hurried to the window. Her heart had not beaten more violently when the dog of Hermonthis on that fatal night had rushed out upon herself and Hiram than now, when she heard the approach of a horseman whose form was concealed by the shrubbery in the garden. That must be Orion; but why did he not swing himself out of the saddle? No, it was not he; for his stately form would certainly have towered above shrubs of such moderate height.

She was not yet acquainted with the friends of her host; perhaps it was one of them. Now the horse was turned, now it stepped up to the road leading to the entrance-door, now her host went forward to meet the new-comer, and now she recognized, not Orion, but his diminutive scribe riding an animal very familiar to her. He slipped out of his saddle, threw the reins to a fellow, handed something to the old gentleman, threw himself upon a bench, and, gaping, stretched out his legs.

Immediately afterward she saw Rufinus coming rapidly toward the house.

Had Orion intrusted the delivery of her fortune to this messenger? She found something insulting in this mode of action, and her blood boiled. But the question here could hardly be concerning the transfer of property; for her host carried nothing heavy but a little something in his hand; perhaps—yes, certainly a roll.

Already he had mounted the short staircase, and she made haste to meet him on the landing, and blushed as though conscious of a misdemeanor. The old man observed this, and said, as he handed her the roll:

"You need not be alarmed, daughter of heroes. The young gentleman has not come himself; he seems to prefer transacting business with you through the medium of writing, and perhaps it is as well so for both parties."

Paula nodded an assent to this, took the roll, and turned her back to him while she tore the string from beneath the wax seal, for she felt that the blood was leaving her cheeks, and that her fingers were trembling.

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"The messenger will wait for an answer," remarked the old man, before she began to read. "I shall be down-stairs and always at your disposal."

So saying, he left her; but Paula retired into the sick-room, leaned against the window-casement, and began to read in the highest suspense:

"Orion, the son of the recently deceased Mukaukas George, presents his greetings to his cousin, the daughter of the noble Thomas of Damascus.

"I have destroyed many a letter begun to you before this." Paula incredulously shrugged her shoulders and then continued. "May I succeed better in this letter in telling you what appears to me indispensable for your and my good. I shall entreat and advise at the same time."

"Advise, he?" said the maiden, curling her lip and reading on:

"May you, in memory of the man who loved you as a daughter, and upon his death-bed wished for nothing more ardently than to be allowed to bless you as the wife of his son.—(How much, too, he was inclined to your faith!)—May the memory of this just man soothe your tried and irritated spirit, so that you may deign to read the words of the most miserable of men, for such am I now, Paula. Yes, grant me the last thing that I shall ask of you and demand for my father's sake."

"Demand?" repeated the young lady with glowing cheeks and flushing eyes as she caught at both ends of the paper, as though she would tear it; and yet the following words: "Fear not," held her back from this rash act; and so she smoothed over the papyrus and read on with increasing excitement:

"Do not fear that I shall approach you as a lover, as that man would for whom there is only one upon earth and not any other. And that this one must be her, whom I have so inexcusably injured, against whom I have fought with weapons more cruel, keen, and cutting than I had ever used against a foe of my own sex!"

"Not any other," murmured the young girl to herself, again drawing her hand across her forehead, and a touch of gratified pride softened her features, while she continued:

"I shall love you so long as I drag out this wretched existence."

Again the leaf was in danger of destruction, but this time, too, it remained intact, and Paula's features assumed a tranquil, sweet expression, as she continued the perusal of Orion's clear writing: "But I am conscious of having forfeited your respect, your favorable opinion, through my own fault, and if

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eternal love works no miracle in your heart, of having forever trifled away the highest earthly bliss, you are revenged upon me, because for your sake—for your sake, do you hear?—my father changed into a curse the blessing which he had already pronounced upon me, being filled with only too just wrath against the reprobate who had desecrated the judgment seat of his ancestors."

At these words Paula turned pale. This, then, was what he had spoken to Catharine about, and what had so altered doubtless his inner as well as outer man. And this, this bore the stamp of truth. There could be no falsifying here. For her sake the father's curse had fallen upon the head of his only son! How had this come to pass? Had the physician not known this, or kept silence out of respect to the secrets of others? Poor, poor young man! Yes, she must, must speak to him! She could not have a single quiet minute before she knew how her uncle, that tender father— But on, quickly on:

"Only as the broken-hearted man that I am, too young to give himself up as lost, and therefore firmly determined to call into exercise all of will-power, spirit, and self-respect left him by his ancestors, in order to make himself worthy of them, I throw myself upon your generosity, I implore you to grant me a brief audience! Not a word, not a glance shall betray the inward flame that is raging within and threatening to destroy me.

"What now follows you may not leave unread, for it treats of a matter essential even to you. There is speedily to be restored to you what the deceased has saved of your inheritance and increased by his fatherly solicitude. It will be difficult in these troublous times to invest this property securely and to advantage. Consider how the Arabs have followed the Byzantines; the tables may be turned, the now discouraged and subdued Persians, the Avars, or other people unknown yet to history may supplant our present rulers, who ten years ago were taken for a handful of restless camel-drivers, caravan leaders and wretched dwellers in the desert. The disposition of your fortune would not be so hard, if we could trust, as formerly, the great Alexandrine dealers. But in this city one great house after another breaks, and all confidence is utterly destroyed. To hide or bury your possessions, as the most of the Egyptians do these hard times, does not suit you, for the same reason that hindered us from entering it on the registry of landed estate as arable land, bearing interest; for it must be at your disposal at any time; it may well happen that you desire speedily to leave your native land. All these are things

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with which a woman is not familiar. I recommend, therefore, that you commit the management of your affairs to us men; to Doctor Philippus, your entertainer Rufinus, whom I hear praised as an honest old man, and our upright and experienced treasurer, Nilus, who is known to you as an incorruptible judge. I propose that we meet for consultation to-morrow, at Rufinus's house. Be you present or not, as you choose. In a few minutes our interview will be over, and I insist upon it only for the sake of settling a certain matter, an exchange, restoring something dear to you that has been lost, and if I can not reinstate myself in your esteem, at least win from you a word of reconciliation. I need such a one, believe me, Paula; it will be as necessary to me as the breath of life if I am to succeed in the work of self-reform on which I have started. Tell the messenger, if you have so far conquered yourself as to read this letter, simply 'Yes,' in order to deliver me from tormenting uncertainty. If this does not happen, which God forbid, then Nilus will convey to you to-day what is yours. If you have taken cognizance of these lines, then I shall make my appearance to-morrow, two hours before noon, in order to take part in the conference of which I have been speaking. God preserve you, and incline your proud, noble heart to mildness!"

Drawing a deep breath, Paula let drop the hand that held this significant writing, and stood still a long while leaning against the window-sill. Then she called Pulcheria, and asked her to take charge of her patients for a short while, and when she received a look of enthusiastic admiration from her clear eyes, and a tender inquiry as to the cause of her paleness, she kissed her upon her lips and eyes, and said, affectionately: "Good, happy child!" Then she repaired to her own apartments on the other side of the stairs. There she read her letter a second time.

Yes, that was himself, the same old Orion as she had found him from the time of his return up to that never-to-be-forgotten sail on the river. He was assuredly a poet, and nature had made it so easy for him to allure simple souls to faith in his truth!

But no! What he said here was honestly meant. Philippus is well versed in human nature, and he said that Orion had a warm heart! With his beloved father's dying curse ringing in his ears, even the vilest reprobate could not make sport.

And as she read over again that paragraph of the letter in which he explained that it was his monstrous conduct to her in his capacity of judge which had changed into a curse the

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blessing of the departed, cold chills ran over her, and she said to herself that their positions toward one another were reversed, and that he had suffered infinitely more through her than she through him. His pale countenance as she had seen it in the cemetery, again rose vividly before her mind's eye, and had he now stood opposite her she would have hastened up to him, stretched out her hand sympathetically, and assured him that the dreadful misfortune which had come upon him through her awakened in her the deepest, most heartfelt compassion.

Early that morning she had asked the Masdakite whether he had not already sent his petitions heavenward that his health might be speedily restored, and he had replied that the Persians never prayed for any single blessing, but only for "good," because none but the Eternal can know what is a real blessing to mortals. How wise that was! In this case might not the most frightful misfortune that could befall a son, viz., his father's curse, turn out to be a blessing? It was certainly this curse which had led him to repentance and the new career upon which he had entered. She saw in him a penitent, wanted to believe in his conversion, and did so. In his letter he had declared his love, and even sued for her hand. Yesterday she would have been furiously angry at this, to-day she could forgive him for it willingly, for how could she be angry with the unfortunate, the man to whom she had been the occasion of the severest pain? Her heart now beat joyfully in the hope of seeing him again; yes, it seemed to her as if the youth so fêted and caressed upon his return home had matured into a full-grown, earnest manhood through all that he had suffered and endured since he had been betrayed into crime.

And what a task to aid this seeker after rectitude, to become that which he had undertaken to be!

The considerate manner in which he had interested himself about her material welfare, certainly deserved her gratitude. What could he have meant, though, by the exchange which he had proposed to her? The "great love," of which he had spoken to Catharine, shone in every line of his letter, and every woman pardons the man who has the temerity to love her, though he were a sinner and a scarecrow into the bargain. Would that his heart still clung to her! Hers—yes, there was no use in falsifying about it—hers was powerfully attracted toward him. But she would not call it love; it must be only the hallowed impulse to direct him to the highest aim of life, and joyfully smooth for him the path thither.

The pale, dark rider who had embraced her in her dream should not drag her down with him. No, she would exultantly

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bear him aloft to the highest pinnacle attainable by a strong and noble man.

So she thought, and meanwhile the color mounted to her cheeks, and, with a sudden determination, she opened her trunk and took from it papyrus leaves, writing implements and a seal, she seated herself at the little desk, which Rufinus had placed for her by the window, in order to write to him.

Then a fierce, longing desire to see him came over her, and yet she struggled bravely against it, but at the same time felt that it would be impossible for her to find the right words in which to address him, and as she returned the leaves to her trunk and looked upon the seal, she was struck by something strange; for upon her father's familiar old ring she was struck by the motto encircling the device of a star—perchance the star Orion—hovering above two crossed swords: "Before virtue the immortal gods have placed toil," that is to say, whoever would be a virtuous man can not spare himself moil and toil.

With a bright smile she closed her trunk, for assuredly a good augury was to be read in that motto with the star. At the same time she planned to speak to Orion of this device, which one of her ancestors had borrowed from old Hesiod. Then she hurried down the steps, went past Rufinus, his wife and the doctor, into the garden, awaked the scribe who had been long asleep, and charged him to convey to his master the "Yes" for which he was waiting. And yet, before the messenger had mounted his horse, she begged him to wait for something, and stepped back to where the gentlemen were, because it had occurred to her that in her zeal she had forgotten to mention to them Orion's proposition.

The hour appointed for the conference was agreeable to both, and while Philippus informed the scribe that they would expect his master, the old man looked in the young girl's face with undisguised satisfaction, and said:

"We have feared that the news from the governor's palace would put you into bad spirits, but, thank God, you look as if you had just come out of a refreshing bath. What think you, Johanna? Twenty years ago such an inmate of our dwelling would have made you jealous! Or is there no place in your dove-like soul for that hateful feeling?"

"Go away," answered the matron, smiling. "Have I seen all the beauties at whom you, old rover, have cast an eye in the course of your far-off wanderings?"

"No, my dear; yet so truly as man is the measure of all

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things, however far I have planted my staff, a goddess such as this I have never met with!"

"And assuredly not I in my snail-shell life,' chimed in dame Johanna, fastening her bright eyes upon Paula with fervent admiration.

CHAPTER XXI.

RUFINUS.

In the evening Rufinus was sitting in the garden with his family and the doctor. Paula, too, was in their midst, and from time to time stroked Pulcheria's silky golden tresses; for she had placed herself at her feet and caressingly leaned her head against her knee.

It was full moon, and so light in the garden that each could distinguish the features of the other, and Rufinus's proposal to wait for the eclipse of the moon, which would take place one hour before midnight, found a so much more hearty approval because the air was very balmy.

The men had been speaking of the approaching phenomenon in the sky, lamenting that the Church, yielding to the superstition of the multitude, should attach ill omens to it, and were to attempt this very evening to propitiate the Almighty by a solemn procession so as not to let those evils ensue. Rufinus called it an insult to the Most High to represent as His threatening finger appearances which followed the course of His eternal laws and might be calculated beforehand, as if the necessity for the punishment of mankind went the same way as sun and moon.

This time the bishop and all the clergy of the place were to take the lead in this procession, and thereby so natural an appearance be perverted in the minds of the people to a significance which it did not possess.

"And if the little comet, which my foster-father discovered a few weeks ago, should wax greater," added the doctor, "and spread his tail over a part of the heavens, then anguish will reach its summit, and I shall see the people behaving like those possessed."

"But a comet does portent war, drought, pestilence and famine," said Pulcheria, confidently, and Paula added:

"I have always believed so, too."

"With great injustice," answered the doctor. "A thousand reasons contradict this, and it is a crime to confirm the multitude in this superstition. It infuses anxiety and terror into their minds, and will you believe that such unquiet of

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mind (especially in this time of the low condition of the water, when there is more suffering than usual) begets sickness upon sickness? We'll have something to do, Rufinus!"

"I am ready," replied the old man; "and yet if that fellow with the tail must do mischief, I would much rather he should break the people's arms and legs than crack their brains."

"What a wish!" exclaimed Paula. "Many a time you use expressions and I see things about your establishment that appear incomprehensible to me. It was only yesterday that you promised—"

"To explain to you why I assemble about me so many of God's creatures, who bear the burden of life with crippled and broken limbs."

"Yes, indeed," replied Paula. "There can be no greater act of charity than to make existence more tolerable for such unfortunates—"

"But as to this," interposed the lively old gentleman, "you think the old oddity would hardly ride his hobby-horse from such a fine cause alone, and you are right. From my childhood up, I have taken a peculiar interest in the anatomical structure of man and beast, and as the collector of stag-roe and gazelle-antlers, so soon as he possesses the horns of all species, strives with renewed ardor to collect specimens of strange and sickly growth in the same, thus it charms me to make acquaintance with every sort of malformation in bones, both bestial and human."

"And to straighten out what is crooked," added the physician. "From childhood up his passion has been in this direction."

"And it has become intensified since I fell one time and broke my thigh, learning in that way how the feeling is," continued the old man, approvingly. "With the help of my fellow-student there, from a *dilettante* I have become a regular surgeon, and moreover, one who serves Æsculapius at his own cost. As for the rest, there are secondary causes which decide me to choose such strange surroundings; a misshapen slave is willing, and moreover, certain observations afford me a yet more priceless and peculiar satisfaction. But this is nothing to you girls!"

"Oh, but it is, though!" cried Paula. "As well as I understand Philippus when he explains to me some fact of natural science—"

"Hold," laughed Rufinus, "our friend would take good care not to explain it to you! He deems it folly and only grants this one thing, that a surgeon and observer can imagine

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no better, more willing, and entertaining inmates for a house than my cripples."

"They are grateful to you!" cried Paula.

"Grateful?" asked the old man. "It seems so indeed, and yet gratitude is a return upon which no reasonable man calculates. Now you know enough; we'll leave the rest for Philippus's sake."

"No, no," begged Paula, and as she stretched out her hand to the gray-beard, he exclaimed, gayly:

"Who could refuse you anything? I'll make it brief, but you must follow me attentively. Now then: Man is the measure of all things! Have you understood it so?"

"Yes, indeed! You say so right often. Things, you think, are only as they seem to us."

"Us, you say, because we, you, I and we others here are healthy in body and mind. Things—God's own work—as such we must look at unconditionally, as sound and normal. Of man, who is to supply the gauge for them, we would ask, in the first place, that he be normal and sound. Or can a joiner measure boards correctly at all with a crooked and warped staff?"

"Assuredly not!"

"Then you will understand, too, how the question could arise in my mind: Does not the sick, crippled, misshapen man measure things by a different standard from us healthy people? Should it not be a thank-worthy task to investigate whether there be not a difference between his measurements and ours?"

"And have investigations concerning your cripples led to any result?"

"To several great ones," asseverated the old man. The doctor here interrupted him with a loud "Oho!" and asserted that his friend was much too quick in founding laws upon individual appearances.

"Many of his observations certainly offered points possessed of a certain interest—"

Here Rufinus interrupted him warmly, and the conversation would have degenerated into strife had not Paula interrupted the gentlemen and begged her host to communicate to her at least one of his results.

"I have found," answered he, firm in his convictions and complacently stroking his long, full beard, "that they are not only sensible, because their wits are early sharpened by the effort to accomplish through intellectual forces what they lack through corporal defects, they are also uncommonly witty, like the writer of fables. Æsop, and the Egyptian god Besa,

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who, as we are told by Philippus's old friend Horus, from whom we Egyptians get all our wisdom, presided among the heathen over festivities, jesting, wit and woman's dress into the bargain. This speaks for the fine art of observation among the ancients; for the hunchback, whose body is crooked, applies a crooked measuring line to things. By virtue of his prudence he frequently learns to measure just like the majority of mankind, that is to say, straight; and yet in good hours, if he goes his own way, he makes the straight crooked, and the crooked straight, and so originates wit, which only consists in an odd and original way of looking at things and presenting them to others. Just talk for once with my hunchback gardener, Gibbus, or only pay heed to him! If he takes his seat among our people of an evening they laugh just as soon as he opens his mouth, and why? His nature drives him to speak in nothing but paradoxes. You know what that is, do you not?"

"Certainly!" answered Paula.

"And you, Pul?"

"No, father!"

"That simple soul of yours has grown up in too straight a line to comprehend things of the sort! But only listen! A paradox it would be, for example, if I should thus address the bishop in to-day's procession: 'You are godless from mere piety,' or if I were to offer an apology to the daughter of Thomas for the flatteries addressed to her just now by your mother and myself, by saying: 'Our incense was bitter from its very sweetness.' If one examines them more closely, these paradoxes are truth in a crooked form, and therefore they best please the hunchback. Have you understood?"

"Certainly," answered Paula.

"And you, Pul?"

"I do not know exactly. I should like it better if you simply said: 'We ought not to have made such flattering speeches, for they may have been disagreeable to a young lady.'"

"Quite good, my straightforward child!" laughed the old man, "and yet there stands the gardener! Here, my good Gibbus! Just suppose you had been paying such gross compliments to some one that they had offended instead of pleasing; how would you have expressed yourself, if you wanted to inform me of the fact?"

The gardener, a little stout man, with a huge hump upon his back, and yet with a shrewd, well-featured countenance, reflected a moment, and then answered:

"I wanted the ass to smell roses, and thrust thistles under his nose."

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"Splendid!" exclaimed Paula, and as Gibbus retired, chuckling, the doctor said:

"One might envy the man his hump; but Miss Paula, do not we know people of very straight growth who are quite capable of making crooked speeches, when they are so disposed, eh?"

Rufinus, however, relieved Paula of the necessity of answering, while he showed her an article of his on the crookedness of soul and body, and then continued more eagerly:

"I call upon you all to witness if lame Baste—one of her legs is much shorter than the other, and we have with difficulty contrived that it should bear her—does not limit her measurement of things to what is below her on the surface of the earth? In order not to stumble, she must continually look down upon the ground, and what has been the consequence of this? She can never tell you what hangs upon a tree, and about three weeks ago, when the sky was bright and the moon on the wane, although she had been sitting in the open air with the other people until a late hour evening after evening—it was noon then—I asked her if the moon had been shining the night before, she could not tell. Like her leg, her measurement of things has fallen short. Am I right or wrong?"

"In this case you are right," answered the doctor; "and yet I know lame people—"

Again a dispute was imminent between the two friends, but Pulcheria put an end to it this time by exclaiming, enthusiastically:

"Baste is the best, most kind-hearted thing in the whole house!"

"Because she considers her own nature," returned Rufinus. "She knows herself, and because she knows how pain hurts, she treats others with consideration. Do you remember, Philippus, how we disputed after that anatomical lecture which we had listened to together at Cæsarea?"

"To be sure I do," interposed the doctor, "and since experience has only confirmed the opinion I held then, viz., that there is no more pernicious and at the same time untrue saying than the Latin, 'Mens sana in corpore sano,' if they translate it as is commonly done by, 'Only in a sound body is to be found a sound mind.' As a wish it may do, although many a time I have been tempted to find that too problematical, for, in frail bodies I have often met with a strength of mind, a sweetness of disposition, showing gratitude for the smallest favor, a fine sensibility, a wise reticence, and an undeviating

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devotion to higher things, such as I have not found the counterpart to among the healthy. The body is only the tenement of the soul, and as in huts and palaces there are good and bad, wise and foolish, and as it is often the case that more genuine goodness of heart is found in the hut than in the gorgeous palaces of the great, thus we find noble souls in ugly and beautiful, sound and sickly bodies, and perhaps more frequently in the former than in the latter. One must deal cautiously with such false sayings that are handed from one to another, for they can only inflict pain upon those who, without that, find it hard enough to bear the burdens of life. In my opinion, the humpback thinks as accurately as the athlete, or, think you, that if a mother's children were born in a spiral den, and grew up there, that they could not rise up erect as do the rest of mankind?"

"That comparison halts!" exclaimed the old man, eagerly, "and needs to be propped up. Shall we not fall into open disputation?"

"You are to keep the peace," said Johanna, interrupting her husband, and before he could speak again Paula asked him in a straightforward, direct way:

"How old are you, my worthy host?"

"The second day of my seventieth year was rendered memorable by your then entering my house for the first time," answered Rufinus, with a courteous bow. But his wife shook her finger at him threateningly and exclaimed:

"I wonder if you have not a hump hidden somewhere, husband? So finely turned a compliment—"

"He imitates the style of his cripples," said Paula, playfully. "But now comes your turn, friend Philippus. Your exposition was that of an older sage, and has impressed me, but for Rufinus's sake, I shall not say convinced. I am indebted to your reverence, and yet would like to know how old you—"

"I shall soon attain to my one-and-thirtieth year," said the doctor, anticipating her question.

"That was an honest answer," laughed Johanna. "At your age one is glad to cling to the twenties."

"Why so?" asked Pulcheria.

"Only," replied her mother, "there are girls to whom thirty seems to be an age too old to be pleasing."

"Silly things!" returned Pulcheria. "Just let them produce a young man more lovable than our father, and if Philippus yes, you Philippus—were thirty years older than nine-and-twenty, think you that, for that, you would be any the less sensible and good?"

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"And by no means less ugly," interposed the doctor.

Hereupon Pulcheria exclaimed as indignantly as though she had herself been insulted:

"You are not a bit ugly! Whoever says so has no eyes. Let who will deny it, you are a splendid-looking man."

While the warm-hearted girl was thus defending her friend against himself, Paula stroked her golden hair and said to the doctor:

"Pulcheria is right. She knows how to apply the true measuring-rod to a man. Note that well, Philippus! And then —do not take my question ill—but how can I help being surprised that the student of thirty-one and seventy years attend the high school at the same time? It will be a long while yet before the moon is eclipsed—how brightly and placidly it sails along! You, too, Rufinus, have been such a world's wanderer, that, if not too irksome to you, we would be much gratified to hear from your own lips the story of your life, and how you came to Memphis."

"The story of his life?" cried Johanna. "If he should enter into particulars, from beginning to end, the night would be ended and breakfast have grown cold. He has had such an existence as the wise Ulysses; but tell us something, husband, you know nothing could please us better."

"Duty calls me," said the doctor, and after he had taken a friendly leave of the others, and said farewell to Paula in a less effusive manner than of late, Rufinus began:

"I was born in Alexandria, which at that time was a thriving mart. My father was an armorer, and in his workshop two hundred slaves and free laborers were kept busy. He needed a great deal of the best metal, which usually came to him from Britain, by way of Masillia. Once he himself accompanied the ship of a business friend to that distant island, and there he met my mother. Her light golden hair, which Pul has inherited, was what captivated him, and because the handsome stranger was well pleasing to her—there are few men like him—for his sake she became a Christian and followed him gladly. Neither of them ever repented, for although she was a quiet woman, who spoke Greek with a foreign accent until her death in old age, my father used often to say that she was his best adviser.

"At the same time she had so soft a heart that she could not bear to see any creature suffer, and diligently as she otherwise superintended work at the hearth and loom to the last, she could not bear to see hen, goose or pig slaughtered. I have inherited her heart. Must I be sorry for it or glad? I

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had two older brothers, both of whom served an apprenticeship to my father, and were to carry on his business. When I had reached my tenth year my calling was decided upon. My mother would gladly have made a priest of me, and at that time I would have joyfully consented, but my father would by on means agree to it, and because we had an uncle, who was a rhetorician and earned much money through his activity, my father acceded to his proposition to devote me to his calling. Thus I went from one school-master to the other, and did very well under their tuition.

"Until my twentieth year I dwelt at home with my parents, and during my abundant hours of leisure could occupy myself as I listed, and if it is not to give it too high a name, medical matters were my sole delight. My inclinations took that turn when a boy of twelve, and then through an accident. Of course I found pleasure in staying around the shops, and there was a magpie there that had been reared by my compassionate mother. It could say, 'You blockhead!' call my name and several other words, and loved a noise. For, when the locksmiths and other workmen knocked and filed the loudest it fluttered about most merrily, and when it perched upon an anvil had nothing but bright looks to give at the hammering, rasping, and polishing there carried on. For years the little beast had thriven upon this sociality, but one day fell into a vise, and broke its left leg in two. The poor little creature!"

At this the old man bent forward to wipe his eyes in secret, and continued without pausing:

"It fell upon its back, and looked at me so piteously that I jerked the tongs out of the bellows-blower's hand, who wanted to put it out of its misery through compassion, carefully lifted it up, and undertook to heal it. I took the magpie into my own room in order to keep it still, and to prevent its hurting itself, contrived a nice frame for its leg, warmed and moistened the wounded part in my mouth, and then splintered it. And lo! it actually got soundly well, flitting about the workshops as before, and whenever I appeared flying up and settling upon my shoulder, when it would gently peck at my hair with its sharp little beak.

"Henceforth I would have liked to break the legs of the hens in the poultry-yards for the pleasure of healing them, had not another idea occurred to me. I went to the barbers and told them that whoever had a bird, a dog or a cat with broken limbs might bring it to me, for I was ready to cure all these hurts without charge, and that they might so tell their acquaintances. And, on the very next day a patient was

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brought me, a black hunting dog, with yellow spots over his eyes, that had had his leg shattered by a missent lance. I can see him before me now! Others followed him, feathered and four-footed sick, and so my surgical career had begun. I have again to thank my old comrades the barbers for the suffering birds now on my trees. I only occasionally treat four-footed patients at present. The lame children whom you see helping in the garden belong to poor parents unable to pay for a surgeon's attendance. The merry curly pate who brought you that rose just now may go home in a few days. But back to my youth.

"The deeper motives which gave my life this direction forced themselves upon me later in the twenty years after I had left the high school behind me; indeed, they never took their full hold upon me until after my uncle had procured me many an opportunity of shining in my profession. Without vanity I may say that my speeches pleased the people, but the bombastic, flowery stuff without which I would have been hissed disgusted me, and however much my parents rejoiced when I returned from Niku, Arsinoë, or other small towns in the provinces, with laurel-wreaths and gold pieces, I always appeared to myself in the light of a deceiver. And yet on my father's account I did not venture to change my profession, although it became more and more disagreeable to me to exalt to the skies people whom I could neither love nor respect, and to shed tears of emotion when in reality I was ready to laugh.

"I had plenty of leisure, and because I did not lack courage and adhered closely to our Greek confession of faith, I was sure to be present wherever there were tumults or quarrels among the different sects. Usually they came off with bumps and scratches, and yet sometimes swords were drawn. Once thousands were contending with thousands, and the prefect—all Greeks—had had the troops marched out to restore tranquillity by main force. There was a massacre in which fell thousands. I can not describe it! Such scenes were not rare, and frequently it was against the Jews that the rage and cupidity of the multitude were directed, backed only too often by the magistracy and the creatures of the archbishop. What fell under my observation there was horrible, too horible to be repeated, but that poor Jewish mother, whose husband had been slain and house robbed by ruffians professing our faith, I can not forget. An armed man then dragged her to the ground by the hairs of her head, while a wretch seized her infant by his little feet and crushed his skull against the wall, just as one would dash a wet cloth against a column in order

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to dry it. That beautiful woman and her child I have never forgotten, and even now, many a time her image rises up before me as a vision of the night.

"All this I lived through, and shudderingly saw a creature of God, a being endowed with reason, rend, persecute and render others miserable, all for what? Merciful Saviour, wherefore? Only out of hatred, only—as certainly as man is the measure of all things—only driven by the cruel impulse to injure, vex and grieve his neighbor, who differed from him in the slightest particular. And these blood-hounds, these armies who followed the banner of pitilessness, love of destruction, blood-thirstiness, were Christians, baptized in the name of Him who taught the forgiveness of enemies, who carried love beyond house, city and state to humanity, who lifted the adulteress out of the dust, who took children up in His arms and had 'more joy over a sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine just persons that needed no repentance!' Blood, blood was what they wanted to see. And has not the doctrine of Him whose name they proudly confess sprung from His blood poured out a sacrifice for everything that bears the name of human—just as that lotos flower has grown up out of the clear water of yon marble basin. And the chief guardians of this gospel of mercy, viz., patriarch, bishop, presbyter, and deacon, stimulated the fury of the people, instead of pointing them to the picture of the shepherd, who picks up the lost sheep, and gently leads it back to the fold.

"My age seemed to me the most desperately corrupt of all ages, and—so surely as man is the measure of all things—that it is; for in it love is transformed into hatred, mercy into inexorable hardness of heart. Not only the thrones of the temporal powers; no, even those of spiritual rulers are stained by the blood of their neighbors. Emperor and bishop give the example, people and laity are quick to follow it. And as are the great the men of strife, so also are the small and even the peaceful aspirants for spiritual benefices. What I saw, as a man, upon the street, as a boy and youth I had already met with in the normal and high school. Every doctrine had its confessors, and he who agreed with Cneius hated Caius, and henceforth spoke and wrote with no other aim than to injure, abase and ruin him. To expose the failings of one's fellow-man, to bind him to the pillory, was the zealous effort of each one, especially if another were deemed greater than himself or threatened to outshine him. Hear the maidens at the fountain, or the women at their spindles! Only she is certain of approval who has something bad to tell of other men and women.

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Who cares to hear his neighbor's praise? Whoever hears of another's happiness does but envy him.

"Hatred, hatred everywhere! Everywhere the will, the wish, the passion for preparing pain and ruin for one's fellowman instead of exalting, advancing, healing him! Such is the spirit of my time, and my whole soul revolted against it in holy indignation, and I inwardly vowed to be and act differently, and to pursue the one aim of assisting the unfortunate, helping the wretched, soothing those who had been mocked at unjustly, straightening for my neighbor whatever was crooked, repairing whatever was damaged, dispensing balm, healing, healing!

"And thank God I have been permitted to keep my vow in part, and if, later, whims and a wondrous delight in investigation were associated with my zealous efforts to discharge the great task of which I spoke to you, I never really lost sight of it after my father died and my uncle left me his large fortune.

"Then I bade farewell to rhetoric and traveled east and west, in search of the land where love binds men together, and hatred is nothing but a disease; however, as truly as man is the measure of all things, up to this time all my efforts have been in vain. Meanwhile I have so established my house that it has become a citadel of love, and therein is breathed an atmosphere where hatred may not come, but is stifled in the germ.

"But in spite of all this I have been no saint, and how many follies, how much injustice have I committed, how much money and real estate that I should have kept for my own has slipped through my fingers, mostly indeed, in discharge of duties that I deemed most sacred. Will you believe it, Paula? —pardon the old man if he addresses in such fatherly style the daughter of Thomas; hardly five years after my union with this good wife, soon after we had lost our only little son, I forsook her and my little daughter, Pul, there, for more than two years, in order, voluntarily and unsolicited, to follow the Emperor Heraclius in his war against the Persians, who had done me no harm. However, I did not go as a warrior, but as a surgeon eager to learn. To confess the truth honestly, it pleased me just as much to see broken limbs, wounds and contusions in plenty, and to be allowed to treat them, as to prove myself beneficent. With a broken hip, tolerably knit together, I returned to these dear ones, and after a few years once more the spirit of unrest seized me, and I dragged my wife and child away from the comforts of house and garden to accompany me to the high school. The husband, the fa-

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ther, the gray-beard took wonderfully among his young colleagues who attended the lectures and expositions of the teachers. And yet, as truly as man is the measure of all things, in diligence and zeal I was not a whit behind them, although many excelled me in mind and endowments, among whom always stood foremost our Philippus. Thus it happens, noble Paula, that the old and mature man are fellow-students, but to-day the elder bows down gladly before the acknowledged superiority of his younger brother in science and art. To readjust, comfort, cure, is the aim of his life also, and often it delights me, old fellow that I am, who set out upon the same career far earlier than Philippus, to call myself his junior."

Here Rufinus became silent, and arose from his seat. Paula also stood up, and pressing his hand cordially, said:

"Were I a man I should join you too. But even as it is, Philippus has taught me that it is allowable for a woman to work in your sense of the term. And now let me implore you—please do not deny me the favor—never to call me anything else but Paula! I never expected to be as happy again as I am with you. Here my heart becomes fresh and sound. Mistress Johanna, be you my mother! I have lost the best of fathers, and until I find him again, you, Rufinus, are to take his place!"

"Gladly, gladly!" cried the old man, seizing both her hands and then continuing cheerfully: "But I ask the favor of you to become Pul's elder sister! Out of the shy, timid girl I would see a young lady like yourself. But hurry, be quick, children, look up, for already, as the old Heathen of this country used to say when the moon was eclipsed: 'Typhon, in the form of a boar, begins to swallow the eye of Horus.' See how the shadow obscures the bright disk! When the ancients saw this they used to make a noise, shake the sistrum with its metal rings, beat the drum, blow horns, rave, and shriek, in order to terrify the Evil One and drive him away. Four hundred years ago this may have happened here for the last time, and now—draw your hoods closer and follow me to the river—now Christians disgrace themselves by the same carryings on. Into whatever Christian land I have come the same spectacle has met me; our holy religion has given the death-blow to the faith of the heathen, and yet there superstition has clung to life, and found admittance to our customs through unguarded crevices. There they go in procession, with the bishop at their head, and how the shrieks of the women and howling of the men drown the chants of the clergy. Only listen! They sound as lamentable and full of passionate entreaty as if old

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Typhon were actually here, ready to swallow the moon, and as if the world were in the greatest jeopardy! Yes, as truly as man is the measure for all things, those agonized creatures down there are of diseased mind, and how can one forgive those who dare to distress Christians—yes, Christians, with the vestiges of heathenish folly, and to blind their enlightened minds.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN EAVESDROPPER.

UNTIL a few days ago little Catharine had been a submissive, obedient child, who had esteemed it an honor to obey implicitly and as quickly as possible, not only her mother, but also the Lady Nephoris, and since her own Greek preceptress had left the house the sour Eudoxia. Not the smallest neglect of orders, no misdemeanor or self-willed action had she ever before concealed from her mother and the good governess whom she had really loved; yes, it would have been impossible for her to go to sleep without unburdening her heart before she said her evening prayer, by confessing to some dear one all that her own conscience accused her of having done amiss, and obtaining full pardon for the same. Relieved of care, and with a conscience as white as the breast of her whitest dove, the innocent child had fallen asleep night after night, and everything bad of which she had had to accuse herself was some forbidden feat of climbing, eating too many sweet things, and most frequently uttering some passionate ugly word.

Since Orion's kiss amid the intoxicating perfume of the blooming trees, the first change had come over her, and almost every succeeding hour had aroused in her new wishes and views.

What had never entered her mind before, viz., to set her own opinion up against her mother's, she now did continually. The manner in whi h she had broken with her friends at the governor's mansion appeared to her perverse and out of taste, and the bitter, ill-natured strictures upon their old friends, with which Susannah's mouth overflowed, wounded Catharine's feelings, and finally put her in direct opposition to those whose judgment had hitherto appeared to her infallible.

So, after the governor's mansion was closed to her, she had no one in whom she could freely confide, and between Paula and herself a barrier had arisen, the height of which she felt painfully whenever she yielded to the desire to surmount it. There could be no doubt but that she was "the other one"

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spoken of by Orion, and if she had gone secretly to her the evening of his father's funeral she had been impelled to this less by the burning desire to confide in a sympathizing soul than by curiosity coupled with tormenting jealousy. With a strange mingling of tender desire and dull hatred she had slipped through the hedge, and then, when the meeting came about in the beginning, she had given herself up fully to the delight of giving free expression to her thoughts, and finding an auditor in a person so far her superior. And yet after Paula's reserved answers to her bold questions, envy and dislike again revived within her breast. Whoever did not hate Orion must love him, she believed.

What if the two were already agreed?

Perhaps under the sycamore Paula had only been treating her like a simple child and deceived her! This "perhaps" tortured her, and at least she wanted to put an end to that. A helper was at her disposal; for there was her foster-brother, the son of her deaf nurse, and she knew that he would blindly gratify all her wishes—yes, even throw himself even to the crocodiles in the Nile if she were but to speak the word. Young Anubis had shared all her childish sports with her; and in his fourteenth year, after he had learned reading and writing with her, at her mother's instance he had been received into the counting-room of the governor's palace to acquaint himself with business there under the excellent treasurer Nilus. Later, Susannah expected to give him a situation suited to his acquirements upon her own estates, or at Memphis, the central point for the administration of her affairs. Afterward, as before, the boy lodged with his mother at the widow's house, but passed the working hours of the day at the governor's, where, indeed, he proved himself sufficiently industrious and skilled in work; but in his leisure hours he occupied himself with things far removed from his future calling. At Catharine's request he had established communication by means of carrier-pigeons between her mother's and the governor's house, and with his help many a note with little pieces of news, invitations, excuses, and the like had passed between Catharine and Maria. Anubis was very fond of the pretty birds, and with the knowledge of his superiors the dove-cote had been fixed up on the roof of the treasury office. Now Maria lay sick, and all communication with her was prohibited; and yet the well-arranged messenger-line was not to remain idle, and Catharine had begun to render it subservient to other ends.

Orion's secretary yesterday had been detained very long in front of the neighbor's house, and she had learned through

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Anubis, whom nothing escaped that was going on in Nilus's office, that Paula's fortune was to be paid over to her very speedily, and very likely by Orion himself. If so, an interview must take place, and perhaps she might have the opportunity, unseen, to be a witness to it. By repeated experiences she knew very well how this was to be effected as regards Rufinus's house, and the only question was to be upon the spot at the right time.

On the morning following the night when the moon was full, two and a half hours before noon, a note was handed her by the little boy who fed the winged messengers in their cote, in which Anubis had written that Orion was preparing to make a visit; but the errand-boy was not received with any peculiar marks of favor, for this time was very inconvenient to her. Early that day Bishop Plotinus had informed her mother that the patriarch Benjamin of Alexandria was on the other side of the Nile visiting General Amr, expecting afterward to honor Memphis with a call. He was to stay one day, had forbidden a public reception, and had delegated to him the task of finding suitable quarters for himself and retinue. Then the vain widow had promptly declared herself ready to entertain the noble guest under her roof. The visit of a prince of the Church must bring a blessing upon her house, and she hoped to derive advantage from it, too, for many a matter that she had now at heart.

A magnificent reception must be prepared for the patriarch. To be sure she had only a few hours left, and so, even before the bishop had taken leave of her, she began to gather together the servants and issue her orders. The whole house must be cleaned from top to bottom; a part of the domestics had to hurry to town, in order to make purchases, while others were bustling around the hearth; the gardeners plundered flower-beds and shrubs in order to arrange garlands, wreaths, and bouquets for the reception; from cellar to garret as many as fifty slaves, white, black, and brown, were at work with all their might; for each one thought that he might calculate upon Heaven's particular favor if he did any service for the patriarch, and meanwhile their restless mistress unweariedly screeched out to them her wish to have this or the other done.

She who as a young girl had come of a house rich in children but of small fortune, and had to toil with her own hands, forgot to-day that she had become a rich and distinguished woman, who need no longer give personal attention to her housekeeping, and so, sometimes she was here, sometimes there, having her eye on everything, only not upon her daughter. She in-

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deed was the fine puppet of the house, brought up in Greek style, whose assistance in such grave work was not to be thought of—yes, she would only have been in the way.

After the bishop's departure Catharine had only received the direction to be ready to receive the patriarch in her best attire, with a bunch of flowers to present to him under the linen canopy in front of the door of entrance. Susannah asked no more of her daughter, and the latter thought as she flew up the steps leading to her chamber. "Orion will come directly; there are still two good hours before noon; and if he stays over there a half hour that is a plenty. I shall get time enough to dress, and by way of precaution I'll put on my new sandals at once; nurse and my maid are not to leave my chamber any more. They are to keep everything ready for any emergency, because, perhaps, Paula and he have a great deal to say to one another. He will not get away from her without a scolding, provided she has not already found means to convey her reproaches to the poor man."

Soon afterward, with her little feet clad in beautiful gold sandals studded with blue sapphires, she bounded away to an earthen mound which she had had sodded and arranged previously behind the hedge through which she had crept the evening before, and there she seated herself upon a small chair, with a contented smile, as though to be present at some spectacle. Foliage plants in the rear of this hidden watching-place partially protected her from the burning rays of the sun, and while from this lookout—now made use of for the first time—she watched and waited, her heart began to beat ever higher; yet in the great uneasiness that took possession of her she forgot the bonbons that she had spread out upon a large leaf in her lap.

Fortunately Orion did not keep her waiting long. He came in his mother's four-wheeled close carriage. Beside the driver sat a servant, and on the step to both doors of the vehicle sat a slave.

This was followed by a few idle men and women and a whole troop of half-naked children. But the curious were not to be gratified, for the carriage did not remain standing in the street, but drove into Rufinus's garden, and the plants and trees screened it from the gaze of the gaping throng that soon voluntarily dispersed.

Orion alighted before the front door of the mansion, and behind him the treasurer, and while the old gentleman greeted the son of the Mukaukas, Nilus superintended the removal of

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a considerable number of heavy sacks into Rufinus's shady office.

In all this Catharine had seen nothing worthy of note save the impressive size and number of the bags, certainly filled with gold, and the man who engrossed her wholly.

Never before had Orion appeared so handsome to her, for the long flowing black robe, whose end fell in rich folds across his shoulder, enhanced the natural height of his magnificent figure; his luxuriant hair, not curled, but with its rich, natural waves set off his face, that, pale and serious as it was, touched and at the same time attracted her irresistibly. The thought that this glorious man had once wooed, loved, and kissed her took possession of her, and then to have lost him forever to another, thrilled through her like a bodily pang, that, issuing from her heart, radiated to the brain.

When Orion had disappeared inside the house she still fancied that she saw him, and then as his vision faded from her inner vision, and the idea forced itself upon her that he was now in company with Paula, that "other one," and that he was gazing upon her just as he had done upon herself a few days before, her anguish redoubled itself. And she wondered if the Damascene were only half as happy as she had been in that never-to-be-forgotten hour. Ah! how her heart ached! She would much rather have sprung across the hedge, rushed into the neighbor's house, and parted Paula and Orion.

But there she sat restless and yet motionless, fully possessed by bad thoughts, upon which only seldom a good one timidly intruded, intently watching their neighbor's house. There it lay deathly still in the glowing sunshine, as though fallen asleep. In the garden, too, nothing stirred and sounded save the small water-jet that poured out of the marble basin with a continually low and monotonous splash! splash! like the bees, butterflies, dragon-flies, and beetles, whose buzzing she could not hear, and that seemed to flit noiselessly about the flowers The birds must have been asleep too, for not one showed itself, not one broke the oppressive silence with its chirping and twittering. The coach stood before the front door, as if spell-bound, the driver had dismounted from his seat and taken his place by the other slaves on one of the narrow strips of shade that were cast by the columns of the veranda. The head of each had sunk upon his breast, and not one spoke a word. Only the horses stirred when they turned to brush off the flies with their full tails, or to bite at the stinging wounds that they had inflicted. Then occasionally they would lift the

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poles, and if the carriage creaked as it was jerked back, the driver, half drunk with sleep, would mutter, "Hush! hush!"

Catharine had spread a broad leaf over the crown of her head in order to protect herself against the burning rays of the sun, for in order to escape being seen she dared use neither hat nor umbrella. The shadows cast by the plants were sparse, so that the glare of midday tortured her; but although minute after minute, quarter of an hour after quarter of an hour passed by for her at a snail's pace, sleepiness came not to soothe her excited senses.

She needed no sun-dial to tell her the time of day; for she knew exactly how late it was if this shadow were here and that one there, and if she disregarded the danger to her eyes could attain to full certainty by looking at the height reached by the star of day.

It lacked now only three quarters of an hour of noon, and in the house yonder everything was as still as ever; but it was to be expected that the patriarch should be punctual, and the only thing she had done toward her toilet was to don her golden sandals.

She took a sudden resolution; hurried to her chamber, forbade her nurse to do up her hair freshly, only allowing her to stick a few roses in among her natural ringlets. Then, in desperate haste, she had herself arrayed in her sea-green silk dress which was trimmed with exquisite lace, ordered her peplos to be fastened with the best buckles at hand, and as she tried herself to put on a bracelet of precious sapphires, and its hasp broke, she flung it among the other jewelry, as one would reject an unripe apple. Quickly now she slipped her little hand through a gold one composed of spiral springs that covered half her arms, and finally she snatched at some more ornaments to put them on herself, after she should be again ensconced in her watch-tower. The maid received her orders to be ready at noon to deliver to her the bouquet which she was to present to the patriarch, and a quarter of an hour after she had left her hiding-place she was once more there. Just in time, too, for while she was putting on the jewelry brought with her, Nilus emerged from the house, followed by slaves bearing several leathern sacks that they replaced in the carriage. Hereupon Nilus got in, and with him Dr. Philippus, and the carriage drove out of the garden.

"Paula is again intrusting her fortune to him," thought Catharine. "They are one now; and henceforth there will begin a constant running to and fro between the house of

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Rufinus and the governor's palace. A finely devised game; but wait, only wait!"

So saying, she gnashed her little white teeth, and yet retained sufficient self-command not to let anything escape her of all that was going on.

While she had been away Orion's black horse had been brought into the garden and was being led around by a mounted groom; and while her eyes followed the movements of the horse, she murmured to herself, mockingly:

"At any rate, he is not going to take her with him directly."

Again a few minutes of silence elapsed, when Paula appeared coming out of the house, and close behind, almost at her side, Orion.

How they did look!

His cheeks were no longer pale. Ah, no! No more were Catharine's; they glowed! And how bright were his eyes, with what joy and satisfaction they gleamed! She would have liked to be a serpent, and sting both on the heel! Meanwhile the Damascene had lost nothing of her proud and noble bearing—and he! Like one entranced he gazed upon his companion, and she thought she could perceive his black mantle rise and fall above his heart. Paula too wore mourning to-day. Of course! They belonged to each other now; and his grief must be hers, although she had fled from the house of the Mukaukas as from a prison. Oh, the demure beauty knew perfectly well that nothing became her so well as dark colors!

In grace, beauty of person, and size, these two seemed like two rare beings whom destiny had meant for each other; even Catharine could not deny this.

A mischievous sprite, she called it a propitious one, led them so close to her that with her sharp ears she could hear every word that the two spoke as they sometimes moved forward, sometimes stood still. Light-footed as she was, she easily kept up with them as they walked along on the other side of the hedge.

"I have so much to thank you for," were the first words she heard uttered by Orion, "that I feel shy about asking another favor of you, and yet you must grant this one. You know what a severe wound has been inflicted upon me by the childish hand of little Maria; but the harm that she did sprung from her honest, straightforward disposition and her idolatrous love for yourself."

"You wish me to take the child to live with me, do you?" asked Paula. "That wish is granted as a matter of course, only—"

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"Only?" questioned Orion.

"Only you must send her here; for you know that I am not again to cross the threshold of the governor's palace."

"Alas! But the child has been right sick; and, I fear, can hardly be removed, and—it must be said—mother shuns her in a manner that is perpetually hurting the poor child's feelings anew, and exciting her sensibilities, that were in an unnatural state of tension without that."

"Is it possible that Aunt Nephoris can treat her little darling so?"

"Remember," sighed Orion, "what father has been to my poor mother! Now she is crushed, as it were, and whenever she sees the child she is reminded of her unhappy husband's last hour and the misfortune that came both to him and me entirely through Maria. The poor little girl strikes her as the evil genius of the house."

"Then certainly she must be removed," said Paula, with emotion. "Send her to us! Sweet, soothing influences reign at Rufinus."

"Thank you warmly! I'll beg my mother most earnestly—"

"Do so!" interposed Paula. "Have you ever seen Pulcheria, our worthy host's daughter?"

"Yes; a peculiarly lovely person."

"She will soon take Maria into her faithful heart."

"And our poor pet needs a girl friend, since neighbor Susannah has forbidden her daughter to visit at our house."

And now the conversation turned upon the girls, and they talked about them as of dear children greatly to be pitied, and when Orion remarked how precocious his niece was, Paula observed—and there was a slight tone of reproach in her voice—

"Catharine, too, has matured during the last days; out of the lively child has come forth a maiden whose hitherto light heart has been burdened by sore experiences of late."

"If I am not greatly mistaken, she will soon shake them off," returned the other. "She is a sweet, merry little creature; and of all the unheard-of things that I did on that dreadful day perhaps the most unheard-of was the wrong I did her. There is no excuse to be made for it, and yet it was merely to gratify a favorite wish of my mother that I consented to ask for Catharine's hand; but let us pass that by. She to whom love will give courage to be my partner must be able to keep pace with the rapid steps by which I mean now to advance."

With her utmost effort Catharine had been barely able to hear these last words. Now the two espied upon struck into a road, that, only partially shaded by a few trees from the mid-

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lay sun, led direct to the fountain in the middle of the garden, and they withdrew further and further. She no longer understood what they said, and yet she had heard enough and could guess the rest.

The main object of her coming was answered; she thought that she certainly knew now who "the other one" was. And how had the couple talked about her! Not as about one betrothed and forsaken, whose good right they had trampled under-foot, but as of a child who is shown to the door when they begin to be tired of it. But she thought she could see through the pair, and knew why they talked so about her.

Paula had to guard against a new engagement between herself and Orion, and he, through the dictates of prudence, spoke of her as a child whom nevertheless he had once showered tenderness upon in order to protect himself from the jealousy of that severe "other one." That he did at least love her that time when they were under the trees she held to with unyielding tenacity—to that conviction she must cling so as not to lose her last stay. Her whole nature was in a tumult of revolt. Her hands trembled, her mouth was as though parched in the noonday heat; she was conscious that there were dry leaves between her feet and the soles of her sandals, that leaves and little twigs had become fastened in her hair—but she paid no heed, and as denser shrubbery concealed the walkers from her view, she hurried back to her watch-tower. Thence she could catch a glimpse of them again, and now she would have given up her dearest treasure to be that which she had always hated so to be called—a humming-bird or some other irrational being.

The hour of noon must be close at hand, quite close, if not already here; and now she shook out her sandals and did not notice that a rose fell to the ground while she rearranged her ringlets and freed them of dry leaves. Only her hands, not her eyes, were thus employed; and suddenly her look brightened, for the couple whom she was watching advanced straight toward the hedge, and she would soon be able again to overhear their conversation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

POOR LITTLE CATHARINE!

ORION and Paula had discussed many a topic since his entrance into the house of Rufinus.

The negotiations with regard to the disposal of the Damascene's property had been tedious. At last her advisers had

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agreed to hand over a half of it to the jeweler Gamaliel and his brother, who represented a great business house in Constantinople. The latter happened accidentally to be in Memphis, and the two had already declared their willingness to receive the capital proffered to them and pay interest upon it. They were to give the security in common, so that each one would be responsible for the whole property intrusted to them, if by any chance one should fail in his payments. For the legal sanctioning of this compact, and the sixteen witnesses required, Nilus promised to provide.

At the suggestion of Dr. Philippus the other half of her fortune was to be committed to the brother of the Arabian merchant Haschim, who was a partner in a prominent banking establishment of the rising city Fostat on the eastern bank of the Nile, in which the carpet-dealer also had an interest.

This arrangement recommended itself; it was safe incontestably, so long as the Arabs held sway in Egypt.

After this business was settled, Nilus took leave, carrying with him that half of the money which was to be intrusted to the Moslem banker, the next day, through Orion.

Without taking any part in the deliberations of the men, Paula had been present at them, and signified her grateful approval of their course. It had not escaped her that throughout this conference Orion had shown himself clear-headed, earnest, and decided, and although the wise, pithy, and unpretending remarks of the treasurer had been ever pertinent, his reasons and arguments had pleased her best; for it struck her as though they always emanated from larger, more statesmanlike and far-seeing deliberations.

After the conclusion of this session she had been left alone with Orion, and then neither young man nor maiden were spared palpitation of the heart and moments of trembling suspense.

Not until after the son of the Mukaukas had grown bolder and fallen at her feet imploring pardon did she recover some firmness and remind him of his comforting letter. And yet her heart pleaded so eloquently for him that, in order to resist its powerful appeals, she quickly asked what he had meant by the exchange of which he had written.

Then he had approached her with downcast eyes, had taken from the folds of his robe a small box, and out of it taken the emerald with its bent setting, extended both to her in humble manner, and exclaimed, with all the persuasiveness of which his deep, sonorous voice was capable:

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"Behold your property! Take it, and in return for it give me your confidence, your forgiveness!"

Then had she taken a step backward, and then fixed the full splendor of her eyes, first upon him, then upon the precious stone, amazed, delighted, and deeply moved. Meanwhile the young man had found it impossible to utter a single word, and had only held out the jewel and its poor setting closer and closer to her, like some poor wretch who ventures to offer the best he has to a proud, rich man in a manner that says it is too mean for such a recipient.

And Paula did not long remain undecided, but had reached out eagerly after her possession, dedicating grateful and joyful glances to the lost gem.

Day before yesterday it had appeared to her as a thing soiled and polluted; it would have gratified her pride to have thrown it, as it were, before the feet of the Lady Nephoris and her son, never to see it again. So hard does one find it to give up the right to hate those who have wickedly darkened our existence and given pain to our souls. A short time ago nothing would have induced Paula to abate a whit of this right, and yet now she voluntarily renounced it—yes, rid herself of it as of a burdensome Alp that obstructed her breathing and shut out the glad fresh air of heaven. Once again she beheld in this jewel a sweet memorial of her dead mother, the ornament of grace which had been bestowed upon her ancestor as a mark of honor by a great monarch. But this feeling had not given rise to the warm, sunny sense of bliss that now thrilled her, nor caused its quick, delightful growth; for her eyes hardly heeded the beautiful, flashing stone, but hung as though spell-bound upon the wretched gold plate which had formerly incased it, and prepared for her such hours of misery. In this poor bent thing lay the power to justify her before her judges and enemies; with it in her hand it was an easy thing for her to confound her accusers, and yet it was not this that occasioned her such inexpressible joy! There came into her mind the doctor's remark that there was no greater pleasure than discovering a man to be better than one had had reason to believe, and here was a case in point. He whom she had once loved now stood before her equipped for a worthy career, and showing himself deeply penitent. Certainly the judgment which she had pronounced upon him had been a hundred, nay, a thousand times too severe! Only one of a noble mind confidently looks for magnanimity on the part of a foe, and he, he gave himself up unarmed into the hands of her who held the deadly proof of the most fatal, probably the only disgraceful, act of his life.

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With this gold plate Orion threw himself upon her mercy. As possessor of this talisman she was the undoubted arbiter of his fate. And as she now looked up at him and met the gaze of his great eyes, radiant with life and spirit, humid as they were from intense excitement, she was inspired with a lofty confidence that, deeply as this favorite of fortune had sinned, he was capable of the highest and greatest achievements if a friend should point out to him the requirements of life, and he should submit to such guidance. And how she longed to be that friend!

Like Orion, it was long before she found utterance. Finally, though, no longer able to restrain himself, he had hurried up to her and gratefully pressed his lips with fervor to her right hand; and she, she could only suffer it and would not have been able to repulse him had he, as in her dream that time, suddenly taken her into his arms and drawn her to his heart. Fervently had his burning lips remained fastened to her hand, and yet only for a few brief seconds had she yielded to the mighty impulse which had seized her; then at the dictate of the strong purpose to do right which animated her, she controlled it, and had repelled him decidedly and yet not without kindliness. With emotion and a sweet archness that had been hitherto foreign to her manner, and fascinated him yet more than her dignity and noble pride, she threatened him with uplifted finger:

"Take heed, Orion! I keep the stone and its setting; yes, the setting too! Just look out for the consequences, you incautious man!"

"Not so! Say, rather, 'You fool, who at last are performing a rational act,'" he had rapturously retorted. "What I here deliver to you is no gift, but has always been your very own. To you its value can be neither more nor less than before; and yet for me it has this new and priceless worth, that it puts at your disposal myself, my honor, perhaps even my life, so that you can now dispose of me as the emperor can of the poorest slave in the palace. Keep and use the stone and this fatal golden nothing until the day comes when my weal and woe become identical with your own."

For the sake of the deceased she had blushingly responded:

"This weal lies already near to my heart. If any person has brought down upon another his father's curse, does it not become his duty to aid that other in getting rid of his sore burden? And perhaps this lies in my power, Orion, if you do not scorn to heed the advice of an ignorant girl."

"Speak!" he had eagerly besought her; and yet she did not immediately avail herself of his permission, but had requested

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him to accompany her into the garden; for to him as to her the sultry atmosphere of the room had become unbearable, and as they had left the house the pair had first come under the observation of the eavesdropping Catharine; and it had not escaped her that the cheeks of both glowed hotly.

Out-of-doors a hardly perceptible breeze from the Nile mitigated the noonday heat; and here Paula had found courage to lay before him what Philippus called the scope of his life. This was not new to him, but corresponded with the plans which he had adopted for his future life. Gratefully he accepted it, and "Life is an office, a service, a duty" became as it were a motto, a watchword, that should assist him in the carrying out of his lofty plans for the future.

"And this motto," exclaimed he to Paula, "will be peculiarly dear to me because it comes from your mouth, but is no longer needful for me. Even the wisest and most useful precepts have never made any man better. Who does not take them with him into the world from school? Words do no good whatever if a manly will does not guide the helm in the journey through life. I have summoned it to my aid, and it will guide me to the goal, for a bright load-star hovers before the pilot's eyes—"

"It is what you term your love," interposed she, blushing anew. "Your love to me, and I will believe in it."

"You will!" cried he, passionately. "You permit me, then, to hope—"

"Hope, hope!" said she, again interrupting him, "meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile," continued he, "press me not now," would follow next. "Oh, I understand you, and before I feel that you have again reason to look favorably upon the madman who lost you through his own fault, he who once fought against you as a deadly foe, will not himself utter the final word, but will condemn his longing to silence, will try—"

"Will you try to show me—to show me," cried Paula, "that instead of an enemy and persecutor I have won in you the dearest of friends? We know now how we stand with one another, will depend firmly and cheerfully upon one another, and thank the Most High for having opened up to us a new and fairer life! This day let us both render unto Him—"

"Praises and the glory due unto His name," chimed in Orion joyfully; and now began that conversation about little Maria which Catharine had overheard.

When they had again gotten out of ear-shot Orion declared that the affair of the child must be postponed until the next

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morning, because to-day he had to go on the other side of the river to treat with General Amr.

He decidedly objected to her dread lest he should be won over to their faith by the Moslems; for however much he might desire to let the patriarch perceive that he was not disposed to submit patiently to the insult put upon his father, he, nevertheless, was too firmly attached to his own faith and knew too well what he owed to the memory of the deceased and to her, too, to proceed to this extremity.

Then he pictured to her with warmth how, in future, he meant to devote his best energies to his poor enslaved native land, be it in the service of the caliph or in some other way; and, carried away by his beautiful enthusiasm, she entered gladly into his plans, and again realized with quiet delight the superiority of his mind and the loftiness of his aspirations.

When, after this their conversation turned upon the past, she softly asked him directly, and yet with downcast eyes, what had become of the emerald out of the Persian tapestry.

Then he turned pale, looked down, and replied with hesitation that he had sent it to Constantinople in order to have it set in a manner worthy of her whom he—

Here he suddenly broke off, stamped his foot fiercely upon the ground, and cried, while he looked the maiden straight in the eye:

"A lie, a cursed, unworthy lie! I have been truthful all my life, and yet if that most infamous of all days is but alluded to evil crops out in me. Yes, Paula, yes, that gem is on its way to Byzantium, but the stolen jewel was not meant for you, but for a beautiful, gentle woman—certainly not to blame in this case—who had given me her heart. She was never more to me than a charming toy, and yet there have been hours when I believed— Poor creature! Through you for the first time have I learned to know what true love is, how grand, how sacred! There—you have the truth!"

Again they moved forward, and Catharine, who had not been able to comprehend the whole meaning of what was said, now distinctly heard Paula's warm and joyful response.

"Yes, this is the truth; I feel it: and henceforth that most abominable of days is wholly obliterated, blotted out from your and my life; and whatever you may say to me in future I shall believe."

The eavesdropper heard, moreover, how the young man responded with quivering voice:

"And you shall not be deceived in me! I am going now, am going in the midst of all my misery, glad, justified in the

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anticipation of renewed happiness. Oh, maiden, I have you to thank for it all! And when we meet again will you not be to me the same as on that boat excursion just after my return home?"

"Yes, and with yet more cheerful confidence," answered Paula, giving him her hand with a movement most graceful because it proceeded from the natural promptings of her heart. For one second he pressed it firmly to his lips, and then swung himself upon his horse to leave the garden on a swift trot. His servant followed him.

"Catharine, child, Catharine!" sounded from the widow Susannah's house in the screeching tones of an old woman's voice. Then the listener started up; and while she again smoothed her hair and cast an evil glance at the Damascene, that "other one," the hypocrite who had shamefully deceived her that night under the sycamore-tree, she clinched her little fist as, at the close of her spying, she saw her rival follow the vanishing Orion with sparkling eyes.

Perfectly blissful, and as though upon wings, Paula retraced her steps to the house, while the poor, deeply mortified little girl burst into a passionate flood of tears at her mother's first word of reprimand, and then irritably and defiantly declared that she was not going to present any bouquet to the patriarch, but would stay in her room, for she had a dreadful headache. And so she did.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ORION VISITS THE MOSLEM GENERAL.

In the afternoon Orion followed the call of the Arabian ruler over Egypt. Seated upon his noblest steed he rode over the bridge of boats. Two years ago there had been nothing but fields and gardens where now the new Moslem capital was annexed to old Fort Babylon; and yet, as though through a miracle, it had sprung out of the ground at the word of Amr, and now already houses had arranged themselves into streets and squares, the harbor was full of ships and boats, bustling life reigned in the mart, and, upon the spot where a sutler's stall had been erected during the siege of Fort Babylon, long double rows of columns encircled the spacious oratory of a new mosque.

There was little to be seen of Egypt and Egyptian life. It was as if a demon had transplanted a bit of Medina in Arabia to the Nile; men, beasts, houses, and bazaars bore the native stamp, although many a thing about them indicated what their builders had seen in those lands of ancient Asiatic culture which

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they had conquered, and wherever Orion had seen a fellow-countryman he was either a laborer or clerk in the employ of the foreigners who had so speedily made themselves at home here.

Before his visit to Constantinople a palm grove of his father's had occupied the site of the present residence of Amr, which stood opposite the half-finished mosque, where now thousands of turbaned Moslems, in their national garb, which had become refined through their rapid acquisition of spoils and intimate association with splendor-loving people, moved to and fro, some on foot, some on richly caparisoned horses, and long lines of camels bore hewn stones to the place of building, he had formerly been accustomed to meet, only now and then, an ox-cart with creaking wheels, a rider on an ass, or the unsaddled back of a sorry nag, and occasionally too haughty Greek soldiers. Instead of the language of his forefathers and the quondam Greek rulers he heard everywhere around him now the sharper and more emphatic-sounding speech of the sons of the desert. Without the servant who stuck to his side he would not have been able to make himself understood in the land of his birth.

The house of Amr was soon reached, and here an Egyptian scribe informed him that his master had gone hunting, and would not receive him in his town house, but at Lichterburg.

Amr had transported his wives, children, and favorite horses to this beautiful building, erected on a well-chosen site among the limestone hills that arose behind Fort Babylon and the newly sprung-up city. This palace had been originally destined for the emperor's prefect, and Amr preferred a sojourn here with good reason to that in his city residence which lay in the business quarter of the town, for the new mosque there intercepted his view of the Nile, and here from Lichterburg the prospect was very extensive.

The sun was about to set when Orion reached his goal; but the general had not yet returned from the chase, and the door-keeper desired him to wait.

The blood mounted into the young man's cheeks, accustomed as he was to be treated with the greatest deference as the son of the first man in the kingdom, and it galled his Egyptian heart to have to curb his pride and muzzle his wrath in presence of the Arabian. He now belonged to a subject people, and there came to him quickly and powerfully the thought that one word from his mouth would suffice to restore him to a place among the governing party; and yet he suppressed it with all his might, and silently allowed himself to be

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conducted to a terrace which was protected from the power of the sun by a long arbor festooned with grape vines.

He seated himself upon one of the marble benches, standing near the parapet of this great hanging garden, and gazed upon the scene before him. What he saw there was familiar to his eyes, for it had been the theater of his childhood and early youth. This picture had been spread out before him hundreds of times, and yet the impression made upon him now was different from what it had ever been before. Was there, he asked himself, a richer, more fruitful land than his own? The Nile—had not the Greek poets already celebrated it as the most venerable of all streams? Had it not seemed so fascinating to the great Cæsar that to discover its source—to use his own expression—he would have resigned his sovereignty of the world?

For hundreds of years the weal and woe of the mightiest empires of earth had depended upon the produce of these broad acres—yes, imperial Rome and mighty Constantinople had trembled for fear of approaching famine if a failure in the harvest here destroyed the hope of the husbandman.

Was there a more diligent agricultural people than his own; had there been before it one wiser or more skilled in art? Did he review the fate and deeds of nations, there where the path of history was hardly yet discernible, as the first earliest monuments to human ingenuity and delight in art lay the same giant sphinx, stood the same pyramids which, challenging reverence, reared themselves in unapproachable, undiminished grandeur beyond the Nile and his ruinous native city Memphis, at the foot of the Libyan mountain range. He was a descendant of those who had constructed these imperishable works, perhaps there still flowed in his veins a drop of the blood of those Pharaohs who had sought eternal repose in yon gigantic mausoleums, whose greater posterity, with their armies, had subjected half the world and reduced it to obedience and paying tribute. He who had often felt flattered when complimented upon his pure Greek—not the corrupt language of the present day—and praised for his captivating Hellenic manners at this place and moment felt proud of his Egyptian origin. Drawing a deep breath he looked westward, and the departing sun seemed to him desirous of illustrating gorgeously the rich worth of his native land, while with the wondrous magic of its light it transmuted into pure gold fields, river and palm grove, city roofs, yea, even the bare mountains of the desert, and the pyramids. Now it went to rest behind the tops of the Libyan mountains. The bare white chalk cliffs glim-

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mered like ice crystals, and it looked as if the glowing orb of day had dissolved in the heart of the mountains, behind the comb of which it vanished as though with millions of gold threads its upward darting rays were linking it to heaven, the abode of Deity that had blessed it above all other lands.

To free this glorious spot of earth and his own people from the yoke of oppression, to restore to it the glory and power that it once possessed, to pluck the crescent from tents and dwellings, and to elevate in its stead the cross which he had deemed sacred from childhood up at the head of enthusiastic Egyptian troops, to break the haughty power of the Moslems, and with his followers bring the East into subjection as had done that Sesostris of whom history and legend told—that was a task worthy of the grandson of Menas, the son of the great and just Mukaukas George.

Paula would not have objected to such a beginning, yet his deeply excited power of imagination showed her to him as a second Zenobia by his side, ready to lend him aid in every great undertaking, and born to rule!

Wholly absorbed in these visions of the future, he had long since ceased to contemplate the magnificent sunset, and fixed his eyes upon the ground. Suddenly his soaring dreams were interrupted by the sound of human voices on the street just beneath the terrace. He looked down and saw at his feet some twenty Egyptian workmen; evidently these people were free, dishonored by no marks of slavery, men who moved along unwillingly, and yet with dull obedience, not thinking of resistance or escape, although held in check by a single Arab.

Like a hard shower of rain upon smoldering fire, like a hailstorm upon a field of green wheat, fell this spectacle upon his powerfully wrought-up soul. His eye that had just glowed with enthusiasm, its illusion dispelled, looked down contemptuously upon the wretches who were of the same race as himself. His lip curled in bitter mockery, for he did not deem this troop of voluntary slaves as worthy of his anger, and so much the less as he realized more vividly what his nation had been and what it was now. He did not exactly remember, and yet while it was getting dark one scene after the other from his own experience passed before his inner eye, in which the Egyptians had behaved shamefully, and proved themselves unworthy of freedom, and accustomed to the yoke of slavery. Formerly three Greeks had sufficed as now one Arab, to hold in subjection a whole crowd of his countrymen. On his father's estates and at his court he had met with innumerable instances of an almost joyful servility on the part of Egyptian

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peasants, village magistrates and officers, although they had all been born free. And in Alexandria and Memphis, too, had not his fellow-countrymen willingly borne the yoke of the foreigner and submitted everywhere as though they were of inferior class and origin, to be cast into the shade and humbled by the Greeks, provided only that they were not interfered with as regards the tenets and hair-splitting subtilities of their religious creeds? In this case he had seen them rouse up and spill their blood, but even then with great blustering and boastful demonstration of zeal. The first defeat had been fatal to them, and to prepare such a one for them there had been needful only a small number of determined opponents.

To undertake for this people to do any great thing with them, and at their head, in opposition to a strong and bold conqueror, would have been madness; nothing was left him but, in the service of the enemy, and associated with him, to govern his people, and use his best exertions to render their fate more tolerable. Thus his father's wiser and more experienced mind had deemed it more advisable to serve his countrymen as a mediator between them and the Arabs, than to offer vain resistance to the Moslems at the head of the imperialists.

"Miserable, degenerate brood!" he murmured, indignantly to himself, and began to debate in his own mind whether he should leave the garden and show the supercilious Arab that at least there was one Egyptian who had the courage to find his negligence unbearable, or whether, for the sake of his good cause, he should remain, choke down his resentment, and abide the issue. No, such treatment he, the son of the Mukaukas, should not, dared not, submit to! Rather depart this life as a rebel, or wander forth into the wide world seeking a great field for achievement, far from native shores, than with the foot of this foreigner upon his free neck—

In the midst of these reflections he was interrupted by approaching footsteps, and as he looked around saw lanterns blinking directly upon his resting-place.

These must be envoys of Amr, who were to escort him to their lord, who, then he expected, would condescend, tired as he was from the chase, to receive him reclining upon his couch, and imperiously ask him what he wanted, as he would have done to a freedman.

But the persons approaching were no mere envoys, no, the great general himself came to look him up; the lamp-bearers were not to illumine his path to him, but that of Amr to "the dear son of his deceased friend." Just now the proud representative of the caliph was the most gracious of hosts, bidden

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by the claims of hospitality to make stay under his roof pleasant to the man to whom he was now extending the hand of welcome.

In intelligible Greek, that he had learned in youth when leader of a caravan to Alexandria, he apologized for his long absence, expressed his regret that Orion had been kept waiting so long, found fault with his servants for not having conducted him into the house, and for having delayed to offer him refreshments. On their way through the garden he laid his arm on the young man's shoulder, told him that the lion which he had hunted had escaped, although his arrow had hit him, and then added brightly, that he hoped to be indemnified for the loss yet by bringing down this same evening nobler game than that beast of prey.

Nothing was left for the young man to do but to respond to such distinguished courtesy with courtesy, and this was made easy to him, for the general's pleasant voice, expressive of the most unaffected cordiality, as well as the unstudied grace of his deportment, flattered him, inspired him with confidence, and attracted him toward the older man, who was at the same time a famous hero.

In a brightly lighted apartment, hung with costly Persian tapestry, Amr invited his guest to take part in his simple hunter's meal, and to put up with the Arabian manner of serving it. Thus, Orion took his place on one side of the divan, while on the other squatted rather than sat, after the fashion of their people, the general and his *wekil,* or deputy, Obada, a Moorish Goliath with black face.

As Amr explained to his guest, the dusky giant understood no Greek, hence only occasionally offered a brief remark, which the general translated for Orion, when he felt so disposed, and the latter was as little pleased with what the black said as with his whole manner and appearance.

Obada, who had been a slave in his childhood, and worked his way up to his present high position by his own exertions, seemed wholly engrossed with his food, which he swallowed rudely and greedily, and yet his remarks showed that he was well able to keep pace with the conversation in spite of his ignorance of Greek. When he looked up from the dishes, which were placed on low tables in front of those taking supper, he would roll up his big eyes until nothing but their whites were visible; but if he fixed them upon Orion their little black pupils shone with piercing and, as it seemed to him, sinister glare.

The presence of this man, that seemed insulting to the noble

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youth from his low birth, despite the remarkable valor and great intelligence that he had heard attributed to him, and although he did not understand what Obada said, there was something in the tone of his discourse that drove the blood to his cheeks, and caused him more than once to gnash his teeth.

The more agreeable and captivating were the effect upon the young man of the general's conversation and manners, the more irritating and repulsive seemed to him his subordinate, and he was conscious that he would have answered many questions more fully and candidly if he had been alone with Amr. In the beginning the general would have Orion tell of his sojourn in Constantinople, as well as about his father, and seemed, too, to take great pleasure in what he heard, until Obada interrupted the youth in the middle of his discourse by addressing a question to his superior. The latter promptly replied in Arabic, and soon afterward gave the conversation a new turn.

His deputy had wished to know why he let the milk-sop chatter away so long before the main thing had been settled for the sake of which he had been summoned. And the general had made answer that he best understands the art of entertaining who offers his guest the richest opportunity of letting him hear himself talk; as for the rest, the young man was well informed, and what he told entertaining and of moment.

While the Moslems abstained from drink entirely, Orion was served with delicious wine, of which, however, he partook very sparingly, and when finally Amr came to talk of his father's entombment, reminded him of the patriarch's hostility, and added that in the morning of this same day he had had an interview with him, and expressed his surprise at the direct opposition in which he stood to his deceased fellow Christian, who had formerly been his friend, Orion took up the subject and clearly explained to the general what reasons influenced the patriarch to display such marked and conspicuous enmity to his dead father. Benjamin had it at heart now to free himself before the eyes of the rest of Christendom from the reproach of having delivered into the hands of those whom Christians style "Infidels" a land professing the religion of our Saviour, and to further this end his efforts were now directed to representing his father as the one alone responsible for having delivered up his country to the Moslems.

"To be sure, to be sure, I understand," said Amr, nodding assent to what the young man said, and when the latter went on to inform him that the open breach between his father and Benjamin had come upon occasion of the patriarch wishing

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to disturb the nuns of St. Cecilia's Convent in their posses sions, by putting a false interpretation upon an old document, that established their claim incontestably, the general exchanged a quick glance with his subordinate, and then interrupted Orion:

"But how about yourself? Are you willing to submit patiently to the blow leveled against you and your father's memory by this evil-minded old man?"

"Not at all," answered the young man, proudly.

"That is right," exclaimed the general. "I expected as much from you, but acquaint me with the weapons whereby you, the Christian, think to cope with that crafty and powerful man, into whose hands you have placed unconditionally—I know it—the weal and woe not only of your souls—"

"I do not know yet myself," replied Orion, looking down when he met the mocking glance of the black.

Now Amr arose from his seat, came closer to him, and said: "And you will seek in vain for them, young friend! And even if you found them you could not use them. It is easier to strike at a helpless woman, an eel, a flying bird, than at these soft, sleek, unarmed, long-coated gentry, who carry love and peace in their mouths, making use of their defenselessness and bodily weakness as a shield, and strike with invisible poisoned arrows those whom they hate; and you are in the first rank of that class, I can tell you, son of Mukaukas; I know this, and counsel you to take heed. On the contrary, if you actually have it at heart to avenge your father's memory in a manly manner, you can quickly attain your object, only, however, on one condition.

"Show me how!" cried Orion, and his eye flashed fiercely.

"Briefly then: Join us!"

"For that have I come. Henceforth my mind and my arm shall belong to the rulers of my country, to you, our common master, the caliph."

"Ja Salam! Bravo! That is right!" cried Amr, laying his hand on Orion's shoulder. "There is no God save God, and your God is our God; for besides Him there is no second one. You will have little to give up as a believing Moslem; for we reckon your Lord Jesus Christ as among the prophets, the latest and greatest of whom is Mohammed, the true prophet of God—that you and everybody must admit who does not willfully shut his eyes against the events that have happened under his guidance and in his name. Your own father admitted—"

"My father?"

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"He had to admit that we were more zealous, earnest and deeply grounded in our faith than you and his fellow-believers."

"I know it."

"And when I told him that I had ordered the pulpit for the reader of the Koran in our new mosque to be set aside, because so soon as he mounted it he was lifted above the other worshipers, feeble as he was, he testified his approval and pleasure by a loud exclamation. We Moslems—that was the meaning of my order—want to be all equal before the eternal, all-merciful, and almighty God; the leader in prayer must not be exalted by a head above the rest, and the prophet's teachings point out to every one the way to the joys of Paradise. To find it we need no mortal guide. Our faith, our purpose to do right, our deeds, no keys in a priest's hand open or shut to us the gates of heaven. As one of us no Benjamin can imbitter for you the joys of life—no patriarch can diminish the right of your father and yourself to eternal bliss. You have well chosen, young man! Your hand, my new brother in faith!"

So saying, he joyfully offered Orion his right hand, and yet the latter did not clasp it, but stepped back and said with embarrassment:

"Do not misunderstand me, great general. Here is my hand, and I know no higher honor than to place it in yours; with it, too, to wield the sword at your command, to dedicate it fully to your service and that of my master, the caliph; but I dare not renounce my faith!"

"Then go and be trampled upon by Benjamin!" exclaimed the disappointed and chagrined Amr, swinging his arm with a repellent gesture, as he turned to give a disdainful answer to a scornful exclamation from his deputy.

Orion looked mutely and irresolutely upon the two, and yet quickly collecting his faculties, he exclaimed in a tone of modest, but urgent entreaty:

"Listen, sir, and mayhap you will not reject what I have to offer! What else but self-interest would induce me to go over to your faith, and if I yet resist the great temptation does it not give you surety that I shall prove faithful to you, as to my religion?"

"Until the priest forces you to break your faith," roughly rejoined the Moslem.

"No, no," cried Orion. "I know that Benjamin is my foe; and yet I have lost a beloved father, and believe in a reunion beyond the grave."

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"I too!" responded the Moslem, "and there is only one paradise and one hell, as there is only one God."

"Whence do you derive that certainty?"

"From my faith!"

"Then forgive me if I hold to mine and hope to see my father again in that heaven—"

"Which, as you fools fancy, receives no souls but your own. Now suppose that it should open only and solely to the immortal part of Moslems, and be closed against Christians? What know you of paradise? I know your Holy Scriptures: is it therein inscribed? On the other hand, the all gracious God has let our prophet look in, and what it was permitted him there to see, he has depicted as though the Most High himself had guided the stylus. The Moslem knows what his heaven has to offer him—you, you—know about your hell: curses flow more easily than blessings from the mouth of your priests! If one does but deviate by a hair's-breadth from their doctrines they forthwith thrust them into the place of the lost: me, mine, the Greek Christians and you in the van—believe me, young man—your father and you!"

"If I only knew that I should find him there!" interposed Orion, beating upon his breast. "Truly it would not frighten me to follow him. Find him, see him again I must, though it were in hell!"

At these words the black burst into a loud fit of laughter, and when the general ill-humoredly rebuked him, the other answered back, whereupon ensued between them a lively altercation.

The insolence of the black had excited Orion's wrath, and all that was in him impelled him to silence this bold adversary; and yet by the exertion of all his will power, he controlled himself until Amr, again turning to him, said in a lofty but not unfriendly tone:

"This astute man confirms a suspicion that had arisen in my own mind. A worldly minded young Christian like yourself does not naturally resign happiness and comfort upon earth for the uncertain joys of your paradise. And if, notwithstanding, you do this, and give up all that is dearest to man, you reject honor, temporal possessions, a wide field for activity and revenge upon your enemies, in order to meet a disembodied spirit in the world beyond, there must lurk some ulterior motive in the background. Try to calm yourself and believe my assurance, that you please me, and have in me an ardent well-wisher, you will find in me a fast friend, if you openly and truly explain to me the motives of your course. It

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is a matter of moment to myself that good fruits should result from our interview to both parties. Put your confidence, then, in the older man, who was your father's friend, and speak!"

"In presence of this man, never!" answered Orion, with trembling voice. "He is supposed to understand no Greek, and yet follows every word that I utter with malignant glances, yes, has even dared to mock at me, he—"

"He is as wise, as brave, and my accredited officer," interposed the general, sharply. You have to obey him, if you belong to us, and—do not forget, young man—I have had you summoned to prescribe terms to you, not to have them imposed upon me. I am granting you an audience as lord of this land, as the representative of Omar, your caliph and mine."

"Then I pray you to dismiss me, for before this man my heart and lips remain sealed. I feel that he is my enemy."

"Take heed lest he become so!" exclaimed the general, while Obada shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

Orion understood his gesture, but although he succeeded this time too in maintaining his self-control he no longer felt sure of himself, and therefore bowed low and reverentially before the governor, without paying any heed to Obada, and besought him to dismiss him for the present.

Amr had not been blind to Obada's deportment, and resented such ill-treatment of the young man; therefore, without detaining him, he altered his own demeanor, and again showed himself as the obliging host, inviting his guest—since the hour was late—to pass the night under his roof. Yet Orion courteously declined his invitation, and when he finally took leave—again without deigning a glance at Obada—Amr accompanied him to the ante-chamber.

Here he grasped the young man's hand and addressed to him some words of warning in a tone full of sincere, fatherly sympathy:

"Beware of yon black, to whom you showed in such a manly but imprudent fashion, just now, that you saw through him. As for me, I sincerely desire your good."

"I believe that, I know it," replied Orion, upon whose tormented spirit the cordial tones of the noble Arabian fell like a soothing balm, "and now that we are alone, I will gladly confide in you. I, sir, I—my father—you knew him. In bitter anger he withheld his blessing from his only son before he closed his eyes."

Here the recollection of that most dreadful hour of his life for a few seconds overcame him, and denied him voice; how-

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ever, he soon continued: "A single deed of criminal frivolity had exasperated the dying man; nevertheless, in sorrow and penitence have I thought over my past life, and found that it had been an unprofitable one, and if I came now with a full heart and in glad expectation, to offer you all that I possessed of brains and gifts, it has been because I want to accomplish lofty, difficult, nay, impossible deeds—"

Here Amr interrupted him, and exclaimed, while he laid his muscular arm upon the young man's shoulder:

"And because you wish to show the soul of your departed father, upright man that he was, that one youthful indiscretion has not rendered you unworthy of his blessing, because, through grand achievements you would force it to change resentment into approval, contempt into respect—"

"Yes, yes, yes, sir; you are right; just so," cried Orion, interrupting the general with an outburst of kindling enthusiasm; but the latter made a sign to him, which admonished him of the possible nearness of an eavesdropper and the advisability of lowering his voice. At the same time he whispered to him hurriedly, but cordially:

"And I, I am your helper in this laudible endeavor. Oh, how you remind me of my own beloved son, who, like you, had gone astray, and who was permitted to atone for all, more than all, upon the battle-field, through death, the death of a martyr! Depend upon me, and carry into action that which you plan. In me you have found a helper. Go now. You shall hear from me shortly. Once more: Do not provoke the black; beware of him, and when you meet him again bridle your resentment, and put on the semblance of never having met him before."

So saying, he looked sadly at Orion, as though the sight of him brought up a dear image to his mind's eye, kissed him upon the forehead, and as soon as the young man had left the ante-chamber, he quickly pushed back the heavy *portière* that separated it from the dining-hall. A few steps behind it he found Obada, who pretended to be busy buckling the sword that was hanging at his side, and reprimanded him thus:

"Eavesdropping! Man of mind, man of action, hero in battle and debate, lion, serpent and toad all in one, when will you empty your soul of all that is mean and base? Be what you have become, not what you were, and do not daily remind him who has made you great that you were born a slave!"

"Sir!" hissed the recipient of this harsh rebuke, and the white of his rolling eyes gave a horrible look to his dusky face;

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but Amr snatched the word from his mouth, and continued his tirade, sternly and directly:

"You have behaved toward this noble youth like a fool, like a juggler at a fair, like a lunatic!"

"To hell with him!" cried Obada. "I hate that golden mushroom of fortune!"

"Envious creature you! Do not irritate him! Things change, and the day may come when you will have reason to fear him!"

"Him?" shouted the other. "I'll crush the doll as if he were a fly! He'll live to see the day."

"First you and then he!" said Amr, in admonitory tone. "For us, he is the more important of the two, he, fortune's mushroom, the doll! Have you heard? Have you understood? If you but touch a hair of his head it shall cost you your nose and ears! Forget not a single hour that you only live—wrongfully live—because two pairs of lips have so far kept closed! You know them. The head stays on your neck only so long as it pleases them. Hold tight to it, man; you have only one to stake upon the game! It was necessary, my lord deputy, to remind you of this once more!"

At these words the black gasped like a wounded animal, and, with difficulty ejaculated, in hollow tones: "So thus are services rewarded, thus does Moslem thank Moslem for the sake of a Christian dog!"

"Thanks you have received, and more than enough of them," retorted Amr, in a quieter tone. "You know what you promised ere I exalted you, a robber, to be my deputy, for the sake of your wits and sword, what I had to forget before I did so, not for your sake, but the great sake of Islam, and if you want to stay what you are, then sacrifice your wild desires! If you can not, then I'll send you to the army to-night rather than to-morrow, and if you carry on too badly, back to Medina, bound, and with the sentence of death in your girdle."

At these words the black ejaculated some unintelligible sounds; and yet the general continued, going straight to his point:

"Why do you hate this young man? A child can see through it. In the heir of Mukaukas George you see the future Mukaukas, while you are entertaining the crazy wish to become the Mukaukas yourself."

"And why should this wish be crazy?" screeched the other, hoarsely. "Yourself aside, who is wiser or stronger than I am?"

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"No Moslem, perhaps; and yet an Egyptian, a Christian; not you nor any other of the faithful will succeed to the office of the deceased; so decides the wisdom, so runs the mandate of the caliph."

"And he proposes, too, to leave his millions to the curly haired ape, does he?"

"Are you hankering after them too, insatiable creature, after them? Does not the weight of what you have gained through avarice press heavily enough upon you yet? Gold, always more gold, that is the goal, the noble goal of your desires! A fat morsel that the estate of the Mukaukas, his gold talents, precious stones, slaves and horses; I find it so too; and yet, thanks to the God of Mercy, we are no thieves and robbers."

"Who was it that brought forth the millions of Peter the Egyptian from their hiding-place beneath the reservoir, and caused him to bite the dust?"

"I—I! But only—you know it—in order to send them to Medina. Peter had concealed them from us before we executed him; the Mukaukas and his son have reported for registration up to the last *dirias* and rood of land that they possess; their taxes have been correctly paid, and so their property belongs to them, as yours does to you, as our swords, horses and wives do to you and myself. Whereto is your insatiate soul forever impelling you— Hands off of that dagger-hilt! Not a copper piece of theirs falls into your greedy maw, so help me Heaven! Do not cast another evil glance upon the son of the Mukaukas! Do not put my patience to too hard a test, else, man, else—hold fast to that head of yours—else you will soon have to look for it lying at your feet, and what I say, I have said! Good-night, now! Early to-morrow morning you will have to explain, in divan, your plans for the new distribution of the land; it will not please me, either in general or in detail, and I shall have designs worked out."

So saying, the general turned his back upon his subordinate, and no sooner had the door closed behind him than he shook his fist threateningly at his lord and master, who, up to this time, had concealed his cognizance of his deputy having abstracted a portion of the gold intrusted to him for transmittal to Medina. Raging, he ran up and down, snorting and blowing, until slaves entered, in order to clear away the remains of the repast.

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CHAPTER XXV.

HORUS APOLLO.

In the moonlighted and starry night Orion set out on his return home. He held up his head high, and he had not felt so light of heart and hopeful since that boat-ride which he had taken with Paula.

After he had crossed the bridge of boats, he did not turn his horse's head directly in the direction of his own mansion; the night air was so refreshing to him that he dreaded to be shut up between four walls. Endued with new life, as though rid of a heavy burden, at a brisk trot he rode up to the house which sheltered his beloved, and he pictured to himself her delight at the intelligence that he had found in Amr a promoter of his plans.

The general, whose noble nature, intellect and uprightness his father had highly prized, had struck him too as his *beau idéal* of noble manliness, and when he compared him with the distinguished officials and military commanders whom he had seen at the Byzantine court, he could not but smile. They were to that worthy and at the same time bright and warm-hearted man as the rigid old statues of his ancestors were to the inspired creations of Greek art.

Now he blessed the memory of his father, who had freed his native land from the dominion of that degenerate brood. To-day he knew that the deceased, whose image was ever before him, would have been satisfied with him, and that lent him a feeling of happiness, which he longed to retain and augment through the thoughts and actions of his whole future life. "Life, an office, a service, a duty"—this watchword, from the dearest of mouths, was to keep him in the new path, and as he hoped, full of self-confidence, soon to be able to point to manly actions that would give him the right to link his fate with that of the noblest of her sex!

Full of such thoughts, he had approached the house of Rufinus. Two corner windows in the upper story were brightly lighted, both of which looked out upon Nile Street and the river. He did not know which rooms Paula occupied, but nevertheless he looked up, with the vague suspicion that this light was shining for her, and the female figure that now appeared in the open casement told him that he had not been mistaken, for he recognized it as that of Paula's nurse, Per-

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petua. The sound of a horse's hoofs had called the curious old woman to the window, but by the pale light of the stars she did not seem to recognize him.

At a slow pace he rode on, and as he soon afterward turned around and looked up again, in the hope this time of finding his beloved at the window, he found it empty; and yet he observed a long, dark shadow that moved from one side of the room to the other, and that could belong neither to the nurse or his beloved. It must be that of an unusually tall man, and as he sat still, and again looked up, this time uneasily and a victim to painful sensations, he plainly recognized Philippus.

Midnight had passed. How should he explain Paula's receiving him at this hour?

Was she sick?

Was not this chamber hers?

Was the nurse only accidentally with her, and the physician in one of Rufinus's rooms?

But no!

The woman who now passed by the window, and with outstretched hand went straight toward the shadow of the man, was Thomas's daughter, and no other!

His heart began to beat much faster, and a solicitude began to take possession of him that his vanity had hitherto kept aloof from him, although he had already several times been a witness of the friendly understanding existing between Paula and the doctor.

Perhaps something more than friendship and harmless confidence had caused the maiden to claim so unreservedly the protection and service of this man. Could he have won Paula's heart, her love?

Was that possible?

And why not?

What was there to object to in Philippus save his homely face and low birth. But how many women had he seen bestow their love in disregard of worse obstacles than these. The doctor was hardly five years older than he, and as Orion recalled the looks which he had fixed upon Paula that very day his uneasiness increased.

Philippus loved Paula!

Only too well versed as he was in affairs of the heart, a little circumstance that suddenly recurred to him made him look upon this as certain. It had struck him yesterday that, since his father's death, that is to say, since Paula's removal to the house of Rufinus, that Philippus had paid much more attention to his dress than he had been accustomed to do. "Such meta-

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morphoses," thought he, "only occur in persons of his grave character when they are in love."

There came over him a torturing feeling, made up of anxiety and indignation, as he again saw the long shadow appear at the window. For the first time in his life he was conscious of the pangs of that jealousy which he had often enough smiled at, as witnessed among his friends; and yet was it not foolish to allow himself to be tortured on her account? since what had happened in the morning might he not depend securely upon his beloved? And this Philippus! If he, Orion, must retire behind him, to an inferior place, before a higher tribunal, assuredly in qualities that attract a woman's heart, he was his superior! But in spite of all this it pained him to know that Paula was in the doctor's company at this hour, and angrily he jerked around his horse, and it rather gratified him in his present mood that the noble, fiery steed would not submit to such unwonted rough handling, and at the distance of a hundred paces from those accursed bright windows, displayed again all the trickishness and insubordination which had been gotten out of him as a foal. Orion had to go through a regular battle with his steed, and it did him good to assert his supremacy over him with bit and rein. Now the animal wheeled around and around, and then he would vault with him upon high; but the powerful rider was his master, and after he had forced him to quiet and obedience, he patted him on his sleek neck, and looked around him, drawing a deep breath.

At his side, the denser, dark shrubbery in the widow Susannah's garden overtopped the low hedge that inclosed it, and behind it, from the rear of her house, which faced upon Nile Street, gleamed yet brighter light than from Paula's abode.

It poured into the garden from the windows, while from two came only a feeble glimmer, perhaps the light of a single lamp.

All this must have been indifferent to him, and yet his glance was riveted upon the roof of the colonnade that ran along under the upper story, for there stood close drawn up against the frame of one of the lighted windows a small female form, its head protruding so far in the effort to listen that the light shone through its wealth of curls.

Catharine was listening to the discourse of the patriarch Benjamin, whose head, with its apostolic beard depending, Orion could plainly recognize, which was being carried on with the presbyter John, a homely little man, of whom, nevertheless, Orion's father had affirmed that he far excelled Bishop Plotinus in mind and energy.

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It would have been an easy thing for the young man to follow every one of Catharine's movements, and yet he did not deem it worth the trouble. Nevertheless, her image followed him as he rode on his way, but did not long remain solitary, for quickly there stood alongside of it another taller, more beautiful one, that gained greatly by the comparison. Every word that had fallen from Paula's lips in the morning came back vividly to his memory, and the beautiful living impression wiped out every anxiety. The woman who this morning had declared herself ready to hope everything for him, to trust him implicitly, and accept of his protection, the high-hearted maiden whom he gladly admitted to a share in the aims of his future life, whose pure glance exercised a magical influence over him in subduing passion and restraining impatience, and who, nevertheless, had granted him the right to strive to make her his own, that proud descendant of heroes, whom his father would so gladly have clasped to his heart as a daughter—was it possible that she could deceive him like a vain city belle? Could she forget her womanly dignity?

No, a thousand times no!

To doubt her was to offer her an insult, and do injustice to her and himself.

The physician loved her, and yet whatever cause had induced her to receive a visit from him at so late an hour, assuredly it was no feeling that transcended the bounds of friendship. Shame upon him if henceforth he should ever again listen to the base suggestions of jealousy!

How much more freely he breathed; and now his servant appeared, who had been detained at the bridge by the payment of tolls. Immediately he sprung to the ground and ordered him to lead his horse home, for he felt inclined to follow after on foot and be alone with his thoughts undisturbed. Soon he was pacing meditatively along beneath the sycamore-trees, and yet he had not gone far when, upon the other side of the hedge lining the deserted highway, he heard quick steps approaching, finally coming up with him, and then hurrying past.

A glance revealed to him that this wanderer by night was none other than the physician Philippus, and he was glad of the encounter, for it taught him how silly and disgraceful had been his doubts, how little ground he had for discerning in the doctor a rival, for that man over yonder did not look like a happy one! With lowered head, as though bent down beneath a burden, he hastened forward, and now clasped his hand to his forehead with a gesture of despair.

No, that rapid walker was evidently revolving no blissful

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memories, and if his demeanor challenged any sentiment, it was compassion and not envy.

The doctor did not observe him, for, absorbed in his own reflections, he hurried rapidly on, heaving deep and mournful sighs. For a few moments he turned in and tarried at a house, whence issued loud cries of distress, and as he went on his way he shook his head from time to time, like one who sees much pass before his eyes for which he can find no explanation.

His point of destination was a great palace-like building. Its plastering had partly fallen off, and in its upper story the windows were broken out until they had become widened, unsightly openings. Formerly this house had accommodated the authorities charged with the financial affairs of the city and district, and its lower rooms had been fitted up neatly and comfortably for the ideologist, the highest officer of this branch of government administration, who usually resided in Alexandria, but who, in his journeys of inspection, often stopped for weeks at Memphis. But the Arabians had transferred the conduct of financial matters for the whole country to Fostat, their new capital beyond the river, and those of this tumble-down place had been committed to the Mukaukas. The senate of Memphis had found it too expensive to keep up this great establishment, and had been glad to find occupants for the lower story, by renting it out to the physician Philippus and the Egyptian Horus Apollo.

The two scientists lodged in separate apartments, but the same slaves attended to their common housekeeping, besides waiting upon Philippus's assistant, a modest and well-informed Alexandrian.

When the doctor entered his aged friend's lofty and spacious study, he found him still awake, sitting behind a great number of outspread rolls of parchment, so deeply absorbed in his work that at first he only gave a passing nod to his late coming-in friend in reply to his evening salutation. His speech consisted only of an inarticulate murmur, and for several minutes later the old man continued to be buried in his manuscripts; but finally he turned his face toward Philippus, and at the same time impatiently threw down upon the table the little ivory ruler with which he had been unfolding and smoothing down the rolls of papyrus, and forthwith underneath it began to stir a dark mass, the old man's slave, who had long been wrapped in slumber.

The three lamps upon the table brightly illuminated the old man and his surroundings, while the doctor, who had thrown

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himself down upon a lounge in the background of the vast apartment, remained in darkness.

What startled the midnight student was his friend's unwonted silence; it disturbed him, as the standing still of the clattering wheel disturbs the dweller in a mill. Now he gazed across at Philippus in astonishment, inquiring if anything was the matter, but still receiving no answer, the old man again turned to his manuscripts. And yet he must have completely lost his chain of thought, for his brownish hand, seamed by great swollen blue veins, pushed hither and thither now the rolls of parchment, then the ivory ruler, and his sunken-in mouth, that had hitherto been close shut, now twitched perpetually.

The whole exterior of this man presented a strange, unpleasing spectacle, for his scrawny, brownish figure was bent from age, his genuinely Egyptian face, with its high cheek-bones and projecting ears, was furrowed and seamed like the bark of an oak, his head was perfectly bald, and, although he had been freshly shaven, in place of beard, like rubbish that puts up from the narrow bed of a rivulet, there grew in the deep furrows of his chin and cheeks strands of gray hair; the busy razor had not been able to get at them there, and they gave an uncared-for, neglected look to his whole physiognomy.

In keeping with this also was the dress of the old man, if the linen apron and white cloth, which had hung over his naked shoulders since sundown, were deserving of this name in general. And yet nobody on the street would have taken him for a beggar, because the linen which he wore was fine and white as snow, while from his piercing eyes, overshadowed by long, bristly eyebrows, gleamed and flashed brightness of intellect, a strong will, and a repellent harshness just as little suited to the recipient of alms as the energetic, often mocking look with which this man's mouth was often curled. His features expressed naught of the amiable or gentle, and one familiar with the story of his life could not be amazed that years had not been able to melt down his acerbity and love of contradiction or change them into that kindly forbearance, in the exercise of which old age so frequently finds pleasure, schooled as it is in rebuffs and disappointments.

He had been born eighty years before on the beautiful island of Philæ, on the other side of the cataract of the Nile, within the domains of the Temple of Isis, the only Egyptian sanctuary in which the heathen worship could be publicly exercised as late as the boyhood of Horus.

Since the great Theodosius, one emperor, one Augustan prefect after the other, with infantry and cavalry, had crossed

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over the cataract, in order to put an end to idolatry on that lovely island of the Nile, but they had all been defeated or compelled to retire by the brave Blemmyers, dwellers in the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, for this roving race recognized Isis of Philæ as their tutelary goddess, and, in consequence of an old treaty, the image of their patroness was every year carried in solemn procession to the Blemmyers, and allowed to stay for some weeks in their midst.

This old man's father was the last horoscopist and his grandfather the last high-priest of Isis at Philæ. His boyhood had, nevertheless, been passed upon the island of the goddess, but then an imperial legion had succeeded in beating the Blemmyers, investing the island, at the same time plundering and closing the sanctuary. The priests of Isis escaped from the Byzantine catch-polls, and Horus Apollo had spent his whole youth in fleeing from place to place with his father, grandfather and two younger sisters, everywhere threatened by sore perils. Hatred against their persecutors, the flagitious contemners and destroyers of his father's faith, had been the diet upon which his youthful mind had been fed, and this hatred naturally augmented to the bitterest implacability, after imperial soldiers fell upon his family at Antioch, murdering his grandfather together with his two innocent sisters. This abominable deed had been perpetrated at the instigation of the bishop, who had recognized in this foreign family Egyptian idolaters, and the armed force had been willingly supplied by the imperial prefect, a proud and haughty patrician. Thanks to an accident or "to the great Isis," as the old man thought, his father and himself happily escaped, with precious things that the old high priest and taken with him from the treasures of the temple. Thus they were not destitute of the means for traveling under an assumed name, and finally settled in Alexandria.

The persecuted youth here changed to the Greek form of his name Horus, and was known both at home and school as Apollo. With fiery zeal the gifted young man profited by the rich educational advantages of Alexander's city; restlessly he penetrated deep into every domain of Greek knowledge, and at the same time, under his father's guidance, acquired all the love of an Egyptian horoscopist, which, up to that late date, had not yet been lost.

Among the Christians of the capital, and in the midst of their dogmatical disputes, father and son remained heathen and worshipers of Isis; and when the old priest died at an extreme old age, Horus Apollo transferred his home to Memphis,

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where he led the quiet, retired life of a student, and only occasionally mingled with the astronomers, astrologers and calendar-makers, or visited the laboratories of the alchemists, who, even in Christian Egypt, continued to be untiring in their efforts to transmute the base into the precious metals.

Chemists and astronomers soon acknowledged Horus Apollo's superior attainments, and sought his advice in many difficult questions, in spite of his choleric and often repellent manners. His fame had penetrated to the Arabians, too, and when the question was to determine the true direction of Mecca for the proper adjustment of the oratory in the new mosque of Amr, his assistance was sought after, and his opinion settled the matter.

Dr. Philippus had been summoned a few years before to the sick-bed of the old man, and devoted his best time and strength to him, since, being but a beginner at the time, his art was but little in request. At the same time, Horus Apollo had been attracted by the scholarship and earnest application to science of the young physician, and speedily conceived a strong affection for him, the warmest which he had felt toward any human being since the death of his own dear ones. Finally the elder took the younger man into his heart with such tenderness as made it seem as if he wanted to lavish upon him all the stores of affection which had for so long a time been pent up within his breast. No father could be more firmly and devotedly attached to a son than he to the doctor, and when a relapse again brought him to the point of death he made Philippus his confidant, revealed to him the secrets of his inner and outer life from the beginning, and promised to make him his heir if he would engage to stand by him to the last.

Philippus accepted this proposition, having been inspired with the greatest sympathy for the aged philosopher from their first acquaintance, and after he had inquired more narrowly into the sage's studies, and joined in them whenever practicable, he was invited to aid him in the completion of a work that he was anxious to finish before his death. It treated of hieroglyphics, and was meant to explain and convey to posterity the interpretation of their individual characters so far as they could still be ascertained.

The sage, who was fond of writing only in Egyptian, handling Greek awkwardly and unwillingly, intrusted to his young friend the transference of his notes into that language, and the joint life of these two men, so diverse in age and manners, but so similar in regard to intellectual aspirations, shaped itself

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into a relation at once helpful and agreeable, despite the many peculiarities, gruffness and sternness of the gray-beard.

Horus Apollo lived in the manner of an Egyptian priest of the olden time, subjecting himself to many ablutions, and shaving frequently, while he eat little but bread, vegetables and poultry, abstaining from pulse and the flesh of all four-footed beasts, not only that of swine, which was prohibited to all his ancestors. He wore no other garments than such as were made out of pure linen, and retained certain hours for the recital of those heathenish formulas of worship, the magic power of which was to force the gods to do the will of the suppliant.

As the sage had given Philippus his full confidence, so the latter hid none of his affairs from him, but if he did chance to a single time it was discerned by the other with wondrous perspicacity.

The physician had often spoken of Paula to his fatherly friend, and depicted her charms to him with all the warmth of a loving heart, and yet the old man had been prejudiced against her from the first, chiefly perhaps as the daughter of a patrician and prefect. Everything that bore that title was for him an object of hatred, because a prefect and patrician had been to blame for the bloody end of those he loved most. To be sure, the governor of Antioch had only acted under the orders of the bishop; and yet it pleased the old man as it had pleased his father before him to put all the blame upon the prefect, for the descendants of an ancient priestly race preferred to vent the fullness of their resentment upon any rather than the servant of any deity whatsoever.

If Philippus praised her native greatness, her noble nature, the height of her stature and elevation of sentiment, the old man would start up and exclaim:

"That, just that! Beware, beware, boy! Haughtiness, pride, self-conceit you designate by the noblest names. The word patrician comprehends within itself all that we include in the terms self-conceit and inhumanity, and the worst, most cold-hearted and avaricious among them are made prefects by those apes in purple who disgrace the throne of the Cæsars. As they are themselves, so is their brood! What they call little in their self-conceit, is trampled beneath their heels, but we, you and I, with all that live by the labor of the hands, are despised little ones in their blind eyes. Take notice, son! To-day the daughter of the governor and patrician smiles upon you because she needs you; to-morrow she will cast you off as I do

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my old panther skin, which keeps my feet warm in winter, as soon as the hot days of March come!"

He was no more favorably inclined toward the son of the Mukaukas than toward the daughter of Thomas. He had never yet seen him; but when the doctor told him that his young lady friend's heart was inflamed with resentment against Orion, the old man burst out into a mocking laugh, and as though he possessed the ability to read hearts and look into the future, he had called out:

"They are biting now, and in three days they will be kissing! Hatred and love are the two extremities of the same staff. How easily it turns around! These two! The same blood, the same style! People of that sort attract one another as the magnet does iron, and iron does the magnet."

But these and similar exhortations had only exerted a little influence over the physician's feelings, and even Paula's rejection of his passionate wooing after her admission into Rufinus's house had not completely dashed his hope of finally winning her. Early this morning at the conference about the disposal of his beloved's property, Paula had shown herself most willing to accept him as her *kyrios*, her proxy before the court of her guardian. But by many a token he thought that he perceived, with pain hard to be borne, that his gray-haired friend was right in his prediction, that the staff had turned around, and hatred in the maiden's heart been turned into love.

Nevertheless, Paula had never yet shown herself so cordially disposed toward him, never had the voice in conversation sounded so soft and sweet as this evening in their friend's garden. More cheerful and talkative than ever, she had never tired of appealing to him, and so gradually he had lost his sense of pain and anxiety, while once more the world of his own sensibility bloomed forth into new life and he felt his intellectual faculties invigorated. Yes, he was conscious that he had never given better or finer expression to his thoughts than in those hours just passed. And she had not withheld her approval, but joyfully acceded to his propositions, and when, after midnight, he had repaired with her to the sick a new and delicious hope was springing up in his heart, making it to bound with joy. Raptarously, like one intoxicated, he had yielded to her wish to attend her to her parlor, and there, there—

Poor, undeceived man upon the lounge there, in the dark corner of that spacious study, where hitherto the mind had held undivided sway, and the voice of the heart been never questioned!

How he had found his way there he no longer knew himself.

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He was only conscious in so far as that obeying the voice of duty he had entered the house of a Memphite, whose wife, the mother of many children, had been nigh to death in the afternoon, that there he had found a corpse and many people lamenting loudly and sincerely, that he had tottered homeward weighed down by their and his own woe, and then had repaired not to his own part of the house but to that of his aged friend in order to escape from himself. Life, for him, had lost all charm, all value; and yet he blushed to think that he was allowing a woman to divert him from the beautiful aims of his existence and take from him the cheerfulness that he needed to fulfill his calling in the sense of his friend Rufinus. He knew his fellow-lodger, and knew that he would pour vitriol into his wound, but this was just what he needed. The old man had often before sought to deface Paula's image and bring it down from its high pedestal, but always in vain, and he should not succeed at that thing now! He only wanted to crush out and scatter to the winds of heaven the glowing passion which had been consuming him ever since that night when he had ministered to the raging Masdakite. Yon old man at the table there, whose strong stern features were so sharply defined in the light of the three lamps, was just the man to accomplish this work of demolition; and Philippus waited for his first words as a sick man waits upon the surgeon who holds in the fire the glowing iron with which he is to cauterize for him his wound.

Poor, undeceived, heart-sick man!

There he lay on the divan and saw how his companion peered at him from over his rolls of parchment, listening for him to speak, and at the same time rocking to and fro in his great arm-chair.

Philippus's silence visibly disquieted the old man; and the doctor saw by the elevation of the old man's shaggy eyebrows that he was drawing his own conclusions, which were certain to be the right ones. The silence must soon by broken, and Philippus waited for the onslaught. He was ready to take the worst, but how could he bring himself to lighten his tormentor's task?

Thus passed long minutes, and as the doctor waited for the sage to begin so he on his side wished the first word to come from the other side. But the old man's impatience and curiosity were mightier than the young man's longing after treatment, and so suddenly he let the scroll he was holding drop, involuntarily snatched at the ivory ruler which he had just flung away, gave a new direction to the heavy chair which he had occupied by a shove which was astonishingly powerful for

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one of his great age, turned his full face upon Philippus and asked aloud, while he pointed the ruler at him threateningly:

"The end of the game, eh? And a tragic end at that?"

"Hardly, seeing that I'm still alive!" retorted the doctor.

"But there is inward bleeding, and wound smarts!" continued the sage, after reflecting awhile. "He who will not heed must feel! They had pointed out the snare to the fox, but the bait was too tempting! Even yesterday there would have been time to escape if one had only had a serious purpose to do so—the hunter's cruel tricks had been fully exposed. He has been here now, though, used what weapons he had, and here lies his game stupefied by pain and mortification, cursing his own folly. Some people seem to love silence to-night. Am I to tell you how all this has come about?"

"I know it only too well myself," replied Philippus.

"And yet I, I can only imagine the state of the case!" muttered the old man. "So long as that patrician girl had need for a poor beast of burden she attracted him to herself, throwing him barley and dates. Now she is rolling in wealth, securely housed, and heyday! the no longer needed protector is hustled out of the way in short order, and as the sky lets the sun rise when the pale moon vanishes behind the mountains, and so this mistress of the hearts of our weakly, slavish race puts the rich Adonis from the governor's palace in the place of the poor overgrown doctor! If this is not so, then punish me for lies!"

"Would that I could!" sighed Philippus. "You have been a true prophet, judged rightly, and yet as falsely as possible."

"Obscure!" said the old man, composedly. "But I see in the dark too. The fact is incontestable, but you are still sufficiently blind not to admit the grounds. As for the rest, it is enough for me that your aberration has found so speedy—and, as I think—so fortunate an end: the occasion—a woman as usual—has become indifferent to me. Why should I needlessly attribute to her worse than she has done? I gladly avoid this for your sake, because upright minds incline to those whom they see unjustly accused. And yet I should think it was for you to speak, not me; it needs not such obstinate silence to prove that you are a philosopher, and as for me, I am not entirely devoid of curiosity in spite of my eighty years!"

Hereupon Philip quickly arose, and while sometimes he walked up and down the vast apartment and again stood still in front of his friend, he told him what he had hoped and suffered with glowing cheeks and animated gestures; how Paula had recently inspired him with new confidence, and then invited him to her abode in order, with deep emotion and surprise

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at herself, to let him read the secrets of her heart, being neither able nor willing to conceal the rapture with which she was filled. Like some timid soul confessing to a priest, she revealed to him, her best friend, the history of her heart since the burial of the deceased Mukaukas, and declared that she was now convinced of Orion's perfect reform after the committal of such heinous sins.

"And upon occasion of this," interposed the sage, "there has been such great joy in heaven that one could not delay allowing the rejected suitor the privilege of sympathizing therein."

"She had rather a severe struggle with herself ere she could speak out as her conscience dictated; yes, she unveiled her most sacred feelings to me, although she durst expect from me nothing save ridicule, warnings, and reproach."

"And why, pray, to what end?" screeched the old man. "Am I to tell you? Because a friend is always a half lover, and women can never resign the fourth part of such a one."

"By no means!" interrupted Philip, reprovingly. "She did so because she prizes and esteems me—I am not vain—feels attached to me as to a brother, and could not bear—they are her own words—to beguile my affections even for an hour! This is noble, grand, worthy of herself, and however much all that is within me struggled against it. I saw myself constrained to admire her truthfulness, her genuine friendship, her unselfishness and womanly tenderness of sensibility! No, do not interrupt me again, do not mock at me now! It is no small thing for a proud maiden, conscious of her own dignity, to lay bare the weakness of her heart before a man by whom she knows herself to be beloved, as she had done awhile ago. She called me her benefactor, herself my sister, and whatever motives you who hate her on account of an old prejudice without knowing her, may wrongfully ascribe to her, I—I believe in her and understand her too. Could I do otherwise than clasp the hand which she proffered me as she entreated me, with moist eyes, to continue to be her friend, her defender, her *kyrios!* And yet, yet! Whence shall I draw the strength to desire nothing more of her whom I love so passionately than a kindly glance, a calm pressure of the hand, an intellectual assent to what I am saying? How shall I retain tranquillity and self-control, when I see her the possession of that handsome demi-god whom only yesterday I was despising as a good-for-nothing reprobate? What ice will cool the fevered glow of this burning heart? What lance pierce the dragon of passion which is raging here? Thirty years old was I ere I knew the

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meaning of that love of which our poets sing. Only through them or the plaint of some friend whose weakness I deplored was I at all acquainted with such a sensation; and now, now that love has overtaken me so late and subjected me to its unconquerable power, how shall I, how can I rid myself of its thrall? I tell you, trusty friend, you who are good enough to call me 'son' and 'child,' epithets that recall my long-lost father, I tell you nothing is left for me to do but to leave you and this city. I must flee her neighborhood and seek out a new home, far from her with whom I might have been as blessed as the saints in paradise, and who, nevertheless, has made me more wretched than the lost condemned to perpetual fire! I want to be gone, I must away if you, who know so much, can not teach me how to kill out this passion or transmute it into cool, brotherly regard."

So saying, Philippus, who was standing quite close to the old man, covered his face with his hands; but at these last words, Horapollo sprung to his feet with youthful elasticity, pulled his hands away from his face, and cried out in a hoarse voice, beside himself with indignation and deep solicitude:

"And do you say this seriously? Are you, a rational man, so steeped in folly? Is it not enough for you to have fooled away your own happiness on this—how shall I call her? Do you comprehend at last why I warned you against the patrician brood? Truth, gratitude, the love of a sterling man—what cares she about them? Away with that little minnow from her hook! trample it in the dust! Here comes a fine fat fish swimming along, likely he'll bite! Will you sacrifice to her and that rascally Orion the health and happiness of the declining years of an old man who has grown to love you as a son because you deserve to be so loved? Will you study, workman that you are, you man of giant intellect, the zealot in duty's path, the favorite of the gods, sigh yourself away like a forsaken maiden, or do like the love-sick Sappho in the comedy, who leaps over the Leucadian cliff while the spectators shake with laughter? Stay, my boy! Stay, and I—I'll show you how a man may get rid of the passion that dishonors him."

"Do show it me," returned Philippus, with muffled voice. "I want nothing better. Think you that I am not ashamed of my weakness? It ill becomes me, whom destiny created for anything else than a sighing swain and dreamer. I'll do battle, wrestling with might and main, but here, here in Memphis, here in her proximity, where, as her *kyrios* I am daily compelled to see her again and day after day submit to new and shameful overthrows. Here forever at her side, with her I

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am worsted, in battle, and see myself ruined body and soul. There is not room for us two in the same city, in the same country."

"Then it must be she who gives place to you!" screeched the old man.

Hereupon Philippus raised his bowed head and asked in surprise and a tone of stern rebuke,

"What does that mean?"

"Nothing!" responded the other lightly shrugging his shoulders, and then continuing, soothingly: "At any rate, Memphis has more to expect of you than that patrician girl." Then he shook as though from a chill, beat upon his breast, and said: "All in here is in commotion, and now I can neither help nor advise. We shall soon see the flush of dawn in the east; let us try and get some sleep. By sunlight one loosens many a knot that seems inextricable by lamp-light, and mayhap on my sleepless couch the goddess will show me the path that I promised awhile ago to point out to you. It would hurt neither of us to be a little lighter of heart. Try to forget your own woe in that of others; you will encounter enough of it every day. To wish you a good-night were an empty form, but I do trust that it may be a tranquilizing one! You may reckon upon my aid; but let there be no more talk of going away, flight, and the like. You will not let me, a poor old man, hear anything more of that ilk? No, no, Philippus. I know you will not suffer your lonely old friend to be tormented in that way!"

These last words were the tenderest that the doctor had ever heard from the sage's mouth, and it did him good when he drew him to his heart in a close embrace.

Philippus thought no more of his saying that it was Paula who must give place; and yet the old man seemed to have meant it very seriously, for as soon as he was left alone he threw the ivory ruler down upon the table with violence and murmured with sparkling eyes, first wrathfully and then mockingly:

"To retain this true heart, this best of workmen for myself and the world, I would send a dozen such full-blood misses into *Amenthe*.* Hey, hey, hey, you most beautiful of beauties, the good doctor is too bad for us, and we'll cast him from us like a date-seed after we have eaten the fruit! Every one to his taste! But how about it if old Horus should compel us to learn his value? Patience! Patience! With the goal in view, I have always succeeded in reaching it—I refer to the

* The Gehenna of the ancient Egyptians.

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field of science, of course—and yet life, the life of the wise, what else is it but a kindred science? Why should not old Horus try once more before he departs what his wits can achieve in the bustling mart of human existence? Exultant as you now are with your chosen lover, fair breaker of hearts, you will yet have to give place to the poor football that you have spurned! You will, though! Depend upon that, my darling; you will, indeed! Halloo, there, Anubis!"

So saying, he shoved with his naked foot the slave who had slumbered on undisturbed underneath the table, and while he lighted his master to his chamber and there rendered him assistance in his careful and long-continued ablutions, the old man did not cease to mutter to himself in broken sentences, sometimes breaking out into invectives and then again chuckling ill-naturedly.

END OF FIRST HALF.

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THE BRIDE OF THE NILE.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ORION MEETS THE PATRIARCH.

LIKE the physician Philippus, Orion enjoyed little rest that night. He no longer doubted Paula's fidelity; but his whole heart yearned for her and for the assurance that she loved him and him alone, and this longing kept him awake.

At the first approach of day he sprung up, delighted that the night was past, and crossed the Nile for the purpose of placing in the hands of the banker Salech, the brother of the old merchant Haschim, the half of the fortune of the daughter of Thomas.

In Memphis all was still quiet, and to-day everything that came under his observation seemed more than ever worn out, decayed, sluggish and dilapidated; all seemed ready to fall into ruins, while on the opposite side of the river, in the youthful and vigorous Fostat, he found everything, wherever he turned his eyes, in a state of wakeful, stirring, and growing activity.

Involuntarily he compared the old city of the Pharaohs behind him to a decaying mummy, and the new residence of the commander Amr to a lusty youth.

Here everything was in motion, ever busy, ever active.

The banker, like all Mussulmen, had risen early, "so soon as one could distinguish a white from a black thread," to offer up his first prayer; and Orion found him employed in counting rolls of gold and silver; and it was wonderful with what rapidity, accuracy, and cleverness the Arabian completed the business transaction for Orion and Nilus, who had accompanied him. Wherever he looked he saw nothing but bright eyes, strong, bold and enterprising countenances. No stooping shoulders, no bended necks, no slothful brooding, no gloomy, humble glances, such as met his eye on every hand in his native town across the river.

Here in Fostat his blood seemed to course more freely through

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his veins, there his very existence seemed to oppress and weigh him down. Everything attracted him to the Arabians.

The shop of the banker, as all other business-stalls in the *suk* or market-place of Fostat, consisted of a wooden inclosure, within which the merchant and his clerks waited for patrons. From the open side of this inclosure, facing the street, they would converse with their patrons, who, when the matter of business seemed likely to last a long time, were invited to rest themselves upon the counter. Orion and Nilus had complied with an invitation of this nature, and while they were seated in full view of all passers-by, and were engaged in conversation with the banker, the negro, Wekil Obada, who the evening before had so deeply aroused the resentment of the governor's son, again passed by close to the banker's booth. To his great astonishment he received the most friendly greeting from him, and mindful of the warning of the commander-in-chief, although it required great self-control, Orion acknowledged the salutation of the detestable man. When Obada, however, passed by the booth for the second and third time he felt that he was being watched; however, it was possible that the Wekil might also have business with the banker and was only awaiting his turn.

But Orion was soon to forget this meeting, for far more weighty matters were awaiting him at home.

As it often happened, the death of a single man (although his house by his departure was made neither richer nor poorer, and although during his last days his unobtrusive control had been scarcely observed) had changed his house completely and almost beyond recognition. The rooms, before so full of life, seemed now forsaken and dead. The halls were no longer full of petitioners and complainants; and according to an ancient custom all who came to offer sympathy and condolence had been received on the day following the burial.

The noisy housekeeping of Lady Nephoris, her commands, and the clinking of her keys, were no longer to be heard about the house, for she held herself aloof from all; and when she was not at church, which she now regularly visited twice a day, she would withdraw to her chamber or to the fountain-room, which had been her husband's favorite resting-place.

With the same tired and unsympathetic expression with which she entered the house of God she would return home, and whoever had seen her lying upon the divan which her deceased husband had formerly occupied, with a wearied and gloomy stare in her eyes, could with difficulty have recognized the once so tender and active wife. She did not seem to be mourning

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or longing for her husband, and as though she had on the day of his death and of his burial forever exhausted her tears, she had none left for her woe. She had, however, not been able to attain that state of grief which is consecrated by tender memories, and in which comforting angels often mix a few sweet drops after the first piercing sorrow has been overcome. She felt and knew, however, that with her husband a part of her own existence had been torn from her, but she had not yet learned that this part contained nothing less than the essential conditions of her inner and outer life.

Her own father and the father of her husband had been the first men in Memphis, nay, even in all Egypt. Proud, happy, with a heart full of love, she had bestowed her hand upon the son of Menas. He in conjunction with her, not he alone, had attained to the highest honors that could be reached by an Egyptian; and she had exerted all her powers to maintain him in his much-envied position, and to enable him to fill it with dignity and honor. After many years of unusual happiness the sorrow over the assassination of their sons had only bound these two hearts more firmly together, and when her husband fell a victim to incurable sickness, she joyfully shared his confinement, devoted herself wholly to nursing him, and shared with him the doubts and cares that his political conduct had called into life.

The consciousness that to him she was not only much, but everything, was her joy and her pride. The aversion that she felt for Paula was due, first of all, to the discovery that she, Nephoris, was no longer indispensable to her suffering husband when he was enjoying the society of his pretty young niece. And now! Alas, now! When she awoke in the sleepless night from a light, restless slumber, she would involuntarily listen for those gentle, irregular respirations, and still there was no bosom near her, rising and falling periodically When she left her lonely couch in the early morning the approaching day seemed to her only an empty desert void of vegetation.

By day and by night she often tried to summon before her mind the picture of the dead man; yet until recently, as often as her feeble imagination had succeeded in depicting him, she had seen him only in the last few moments of his life, seen him, heard him, with the curse of his own son upon his trembling lips. This frightful recollection destroyed her last and only consolation, the tender remembrance of her only child, and a proud and joyous satisfaction in him. Her son, who until recently had been the idol of her soul, now seemed to be branded with a mark of shame and disgrace. The burden, which

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the most just of all the just had imposed upon Orion, should not have been overlooked by her. Instead of drawing him to her heart with double tenderness and attempting to lessen and alleviate that solemn and awful thing that his father had inflicted upon him, she did nothing but lament.

When Orion came to see her she would stroke his curly hair, and because she did not desire to wound his feelings and make him more unhappy than he would otherwise be she neither censured him nor admonished him, nor reminded him of the curse of his father. And how destitute was this illiberal heart, that had been wont to lavish all the love it possessed upon a few, nay, upon one single object that now no longer existed.

The joyous voices of children had been a welcome sound in the house so long as they did not disturb her suffering husband; now they too were silent, and she had withdrawn her love from her own granddaughter, who had received some small portion of the sunshine of her narrow love; slight, poor little Maria to bear the blame of that terrific thing that had happened to Orion and her during the last moments of her husband's life! Yes, the insane idea had become fixed in the irritated mind of the sorrowing woman that the child was the evil genius of the house, and an implement in the hands of Satan.

Since day before yesterday Nephoris had had a few better hours. During the sleeplessness, that had begun to torment her like some bodily pain, she suddenly remembered what wonderful relief the little white pills of opium had afforded her deceased husband, and especially against sleeplessness; and a vial full of these pills, that had scarcely been opened, was near at hand. Was she not suffering unspeakable woes? Why should she hesitate to use a remedy that had alleviated in such a wonderful manner her husband's pain? It was said that the pills would be very injurious if used too long or too frequently; and she had often prevented her husband from resorting to them too often; but would it be possible to make her suffering more intense? Ought she not to bestow her grateful thanks upon the medicine if it would shorten her miserable existence?

And so she made use of the valuable medicine at first with hesitation, then more frequently; but on the second day already with true zest and joyous expectation, for it had not only brought her a peaceful night, but had bestowed upon her on the following morning a great benefit; for her deceased husband had appeared to her for the first time since his death, not as one uttering terrible curses, but as a young and happy man.

No one in the house knew what means of consolation the

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widow had found; and the doctor and her son had rejoiced yesterday to find her more composed.

When Orion returned home after the completion of his transaction with the banker at Fostat, he was compelled to force his way through a large crowd that had assembled before the gate, and he found the court full of people and the guard and domestics in a great state of excitement. No less a personage than the patriarch had arrived on a visit at the palace of the governor, and was at present being received by his mother. He was informed by the chief steward, Sebek, that he had inquired after him, and that Lady Nephoris desired him to come immediately to her apartments and pay his reverence to the most Holy Father.

"She wishes that?" asked the young man; and, throwing his traveling hat to a slave, remained irresolutely standing.

He was too much a child of his time, and the Church and its servants had exercised too great an influence upon his education for him not to look upon the visit of the great prelate as a high honor. But he could not forget the dishonor that had been inflicted upon his father's memory; he could not forget the warning of the noble Arabian general to beware of the enmity of Benjamin, and so, he said to himself, it might perhaps be better to avoid a conversation with the mighty man than to expose himself to the danger of losing his self-command during such a conversation, and of giving nourishment to his own resentment.

But no choice was to be left him, for the ecclesiastical prince at this moment emerged from the fountain-room into the *viridarium*. His tall, aged figure was erect; snow-white hair covered his proud head, and his white beard fell in gentle wavelets deep down upon his breast. The sharp glance of his powerful eyes rested upon the young man, in whom, although he had last seen him as a boy, he at once recognized the master of the house. As Orion bent low before him the patriarch joyfully exclaimed, in a deeply sonorous voice, out of which a serene dignity spoke:

"Welcome, son of my never-to-be-forgotten friend! The child, as I see, has grown into a magnificent man. I have just bestowed upon the mother a few moments, and now it behooveth me to discuss with the son what necessity suggests."

"To my father's office!" exclaimed Orion to the chief steward, while he led the way for the patriarch in the formal, beckoning manner of the chamberlains of the imperial court.

Before the patriarch followed him he made a sign to his at-

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tendants to remain behind and await his return, and as soon as the room was closed he approached Orion, and exclaimed:

"Welcome again! This, then, is the grandson of the brave Menas and the son of the Mukaukas George, the beloved idol of my Memphian lambs, who was first and chief in the giddy dance of the golden youth in Constantinople! A rare masterpiece for an Egyptian Christian. But first of all, my son, first of all your hand!"

With this he extended to him his right hand, and Orion took it, but not without hesitation, for in the words of the patriarch there was an echo of gentle reproach, and he asked himself whether this man was really so sincere and honest that he could from the bottom of his heart address him, like his parents, as "my son?" To refuse his proffered hand was impossible; but he found courage to reply to him:

"Your wish, holy father, it is my duty to obey; however, I do not know whether it is becoming for a son to seize the hand of an enemy whom even the all-equalizing hand of death could not appease, who inflicted upon his father, the bravest of men, and with him upon himself in the church-yard at the grave the heaviest outrage and disgrace."

At these words the patriarch shook his head with a superior smile, laid his hand on Orion's shoulder, at the touch of which his blood boiled, and with friendly earnestness, said:

"To a Christian it is not difficult to forgive an offender, an opponent, an enemy; and it affords him joy to pardon a son who feels himself injured in the soul of his own father, however imprudent and foolish his animosity may be. Your anger, my son, can not affect me any more than the Most High in heaven; and it would not even be censurable if it were not —but of this we shall speak later—if it were not—yes hear me now—if it were not so evident from your manner and behavior what you lack before you can be a true Christian or such a man as he should be whom God has placed in so exalted a position in a land that is under the sway of unbelievers. You know what I mean?"

With this the prince of the Church let his hand fall from the young man's shoulder, looked at him inquisitively, and as Orion, without responding to him, withdrew a few steps, the old man exclaimed, with increasing zeal:

"It is humility, my friend, an humble, pious faith that I miss in you. Who am I? But as the vicegerent and mouthpiece of Him before whom we are all but as worms of the dust. I must demand that every one who calls himself a Christian, a Jacobite, shall submit to my will and command

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without thinking or objecting, and as unresistingly and obediently as though weal or woe had been sent upon him from above. What would become of us were each individual to think himself authorized to bid me defiance and to go his own way? A pitiable people this would be; and with the death of the aged, who still cling to the old faith, the doctrine of the Saviour would vanish along this stream, and instead of the cross the crescent would shine forth in brilliancy, and there would be heard lamentations in heaven over so many lost souls. Learn to be humble, learn to bend to the will of the Most High and of His vicegerent upon earth, defiant boy, and show in your behavior toward me how far your own judgment can reach. You consider me an enemy of your father?"

"Yes!" replied Orion, firmly.

"And I loved him like my own brother," said the prelate, in tender tones. "Ah, how gladly would I have covered his coffin with the palms of peace, such as the Church alone can offer, and wept bitter tears."

"And yet you denied him, whom you call friend," exclaimed Orion, "what the Church does not refuse even to the thief and murderer, provided that he strove for the forgiveness of his sins and received it from the mouth of the priest, as—"

"As your father did!" said the old man, interrupting him. "Happy be he that he did! He may at this moment be gazing upon the glory of the Most High. And still, still I forbade the clergy to show him honors at the grave. Why? by reason of what imperative grounds did this order proceed from the mouth of a friend against his friend?"

"Because," replied Orion, "you desired to brand him before all the world as the man who gave aid and assistance to the unbelievers, and enabled them to reap the victory."

"Ah! see how accurately the human heart can be read!" exclaimed the prelate, and he cast upon the youth a glance in which mild displeasure was mixed with scornful applause. "Very well, then, my boy. Let us assume that I desired to make plain to Christians in Memphis what awaits him who gives up his country to the enemy, and advances hand in hand with the unbelievers. Would I not have been in the right?"

"Did my father invite the Arabians to Egypt?" interrupted the youth.

"No, son," cried the bishop, "the enemy came of their own accord."

"And you," said Orion, again interrupting, "predicted from the desert, whither you had been banished by the Greeks,

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that they would come and overthrow the Greek Melchitian enemies of our faith and drive them from this land."

"The Lord spoke that through me," the old man added, and humbly bowed his head. "And other things were revealed to me as I mortified my body in the burning rays of the desert sun. Beware, beware, my son! Heed my warning, in order that it may not be fulfilled, and the house of Menas disappear, like clouds dispersed by a cyclone! Your father, I am aware, gave my prophecy the interpretation, as though I had advised him to use the unbelievers as instruments in the hands of the Most High, for the purpose of expelling the Melchitian task-masters from this land."

"Your prophecy," continued the young man, "certainly made a deep impression up on my father, and when the cause of the emperor and of the Greeks had been lost, your declaration that the Melchites were just as much unbelievers as the follows of Islam afforded him great consolation, for you well know that, if any one had good cause to hate them he had, because they had murdered his two noble sons. What then was done he did in order to save his and your brothers and protégées from destruction, and here—here in this desk lies the answer that he made to the Greek embassy in reply to the reproaches of the emperor when he was called to account in this very room. He wrote it down immediately after their departure; will you listen to what he says?"

"I can guess its contents."

"No, no!" cried the young man, who, greatly agitated, opened with hasty hands his father's desk, and with one grasp drew forth a wax tablet and exclaimed:

"Thus reads his reply." Then he read aloud:

"These Arabians, with their insignificant numbers, are stronger and mightier than we with our multitudes; one of their men is equal to a hundred of ours, for they court death, which is dearer to them than life. Every one of them presses forward in the fight, and they have no longing to return to their friends at home. For every one of us they can kill they expect a great reward in heaven, and they declare that if they fall in war the gates of paradise will open to admit them. They have no wish on earth, and are content if only their most pressing necessities in the way of food and clothing are satisfied. We, on the other hand, are fond of life and shudder at the thought of death; how can we, then, hold our ground against them? I tell you that I shall not break the peace that I have made with the Arabians—"

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"And what does this answer *prove?*" interrupted the patriarch, shrugging his shoulders.

"That my father found himself compelled to conclude peace, and that he—but let us read further—that he, as a prudent man, had to extend his hand to the enemy."

"An enemy to whom he voluntarily yielded and showed greater honor than was becoming for him, a Christian! Does not this discourse sound as if the joys of paradise awaited none but our damned and blood-thirsty conquerors? And the paradise of the Mussulman! What is it other than a pool, within which the carnal appetites can revel in sensuous enjoyments? The false prophet invented it for the purpose of leading on his followers to impose his false doctrine upon one nation after another by means of force and with a mad contempt of death. Our Saviour came down upon earth, as the word become flesh, and won the minds and hearts of men by the convincing power of the actual, only, and eternal truth, that proceeded from Him, as the light from the sun; but this Mohammed, on the other hand, is a sword become flesh! I too have for the present no other resource than to submit to superior force, but I can hate and detest their insane delusion that leads the souls of men astray, and I do and shall continue to do so as long as this heart shall continue to beat, and the sooner it shall cease to beat the better. But you? And your father? Verily, verily, he that for one second loses his hatred for false doctrines and unbelief has been guilty of a sin against the only true faith and against him that proclaims it, for his whole life as well on this side of the grave as beyond. With his criminal and weak praises of the piety and moderation of the enemy, the butchers of body and soul, the corporate antichrist, your father profaned his heart and tongue—"

"Profaned?" repeated the youth, and his cheeks became crimson. "He kept them both pure and worthy of all honor; for an untruth never crossed his lips. Justice, justice toward all, even toward an enemy, that was the characteristic, the rule of conduct of his blameless life, and the noblest among the heathenish Greeks bestowed their admiration upon him, who could recognize even in an enemy whatever was grand, just and beautiful."

"And they were right," said the patriarch; "for they were not yet in the possession of the truth. In worldly matters all of us might well strive to imitate them to-day; yet he that forgives him who attacks the great truth, that constitutes the bread, flesh and wine of our Christian souls, is guilty of a sin against this truth, and if he happens to be a leader of the mul-

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titudes, he allures therewith those who look up to him and only too willingly follow his example into the fire that is never quenched. Where your father should have been an enemy, lending unwilling obedience, he became an ally, and, as far as the chief of the unbelievers is concerned—it has cost me bitter tears—he became his friend. And alas! for our people that such should have been their chief, for in accordance therewith they—merciful God forgive their seducers!—have ordered their own behavior. Many thousands have fallen away from our blessed faith and gone over to those who in their eyes could not be profligacy itself, could not be damned, because they saw their wise and just governor going along with them hand in hand; and for this reason, aye, for this reason alone, I did not hesitate, in order to warn the people who were being led astray, to inflict a wound upon my own heart, to raise a warning cry over the grave of a beloved friend, and to deny him the honor and the blessing which he, by a virtuous and upright life in this world, was far more worthy of than thousands of others. I have spoken, and now you must dismiss your foolish resentment, now you will take the hand, which the Shepherd of the souls of his people again offers to you, willingly and with an appeased heart."

Again the old man extended his hand to Orion; he, however, again took it with hesitation, and in doing so, instead of looking the ecclesiastical prince in the face, he turned his eyes upon the floor with an expression of confusion and sadness upon his countenance.

But the patriarch seemed not to observe the young man's hesitancy and pressed his hand heartily. He then turned the conversation upon Orion's suffering mother, the retrogression of Memphis, upon the future plans of the young man, and finally upon the precious stones which his father had bequeathed to the Church.

The conversation continued quietly and in the tone of sociable good humor. The prelate was now seated in the reclining chair of the deceased, and it sounded natural and artless that he should, in praising the jewels, inquire after the large emerald.

Orion replied in like tone that this jewel did not properly belong to the bequest; but the prelate was of a different opinion.

All that had tormented and alarmed Orion since his unfortunate visit to the *tablinum* again came to life during the course of this conversation; but it gave him some relief that neither his mother nor Susannah seemed to have informed the prelate

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of what he had been guilty as judge on account of this stone. The widow had apparently kept silence about the matter, in order not to have to speak of the false testimony her little daughter had given; but how easily might these accursed things come to the ears of the strict old man, and so it seemed to the guilty man that no sacrifice would be too great in order to get rid of all questionings about the unfortunate jewel. He, therefore, promptly explained that the emerald had been lost, but declared himself ready to replace it to its full value. The patriarch might estimate its value, and name any sum he pleased, of which he had need for charitable purposes, and he would find him, Orion, ready to pay the same without delay.

Still the patriarch quietly insisted upon his demand, gave Orion to understand that he expected him to have zealous search made for the jewel, and declared that he considered the same the property of the Church, and that he would, with determination, and with all the means in his power, insist upon the delivery of the stone so soon as his patience was exhausted.

So nothing was left for Orion to do but to promise to continue the search for the lost treasure; but he did it ill-naturedly and like one who was giving in to an unreasonable demand. At first the patriarch took it all quietly, but later, when he arose to depart, he suddenly changed his entire manner and said, in a serious and firm tone:

"I know you now, son of the Mukaukas George, and as I began, so I shall cease. Christian humility is foreign to you, and the power and dignity of our faith is unknown to you, but you are also ignorant of how much love there is in it, and what intense anxiety there is to bring back the wandering sinner into the path of salvation. Your noble mother confessed to me, with tears in her eyes, upon the brink of what precipice you are standing. You propose to join yourself for life with an unbeliever, a Melchite, and there is something else that alarms your mother's heart and tortures her with reference to you and your happiness. She confided to me in the church, and upon my return home I shall find means to unravel this mystery; but verily, whatever it may be it can not lead your soul into greater danger than a union with a Melchite would do. Upon what is your heart hanging? Solely upon the happiness of this earth! You are wooing the heart of the unbelieving daughter of an unbelieving heretic; you rode—listen to me further—you rode across to Fostat and offered your mind and your sword—yesterday 'twas done—to the unbelievers; but I, I, the shepherd of my flock, shall not suffer him that is most nobly born, most wealthy and by the mere sound of his name

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the most powerful among all the Jacobites, to lead astray and carry off thousands with him. I possess both the power and the will to place an obstacle in the path of so great ruin. Follow me or you will repent it with tears of blood."

At these words the prelate expected to see Orion bend his knee before him, but he did not fulfill his expectations, but kept his eyes fixed upon him, deeply moved and irresolute. Benjamin continued with ever-increasing vehemence:

"I have come to you to raise my voice, and I demand, ay, I command, that you loosen the bond that ties you to the enemy of your people, and of your faith, there across the river, expel from your soul the love you feel for this Melchitian siren, who threatens to destroy your eternal portion—"

Up to this point Orion had listened silently and with bowed head to the warnings that the prince of the Church hurled against him like curses; now, however, his whole soul rebelled, refused him strength to restrain himself, and in a high pitched voice he interrupted the prelate:

"Never, never—no, never shall I do that! Revile me as you will! What I am, that I shall remain, a true member of the Church to which my fathers belonged, and for which my brothers died. With humility I confess my Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in Him, in the Divine One who died to redeem us, and who brought love into the world. Faithfully and without deviation I shall hold fast to mine. Never shall I forsake her who, like an embassador from God, like my good angel, has taught me to appreciate the earnestness and dignity of life, and whom my father also loved. Yours is the power. Demand from me what is reasonable and attainable, and I shall attempt to control myself and to fulfill it; but to become faithless in order to be faithful to you, that I will and can never, never do, and with regard to the Arabians—"

"Enough!" interrupted the prelate. "I am now bound for Upper Egypt, and upon my return you will have to choose. Until then I will give you time to come to yourself, to reflect, and I command you, in all calmness, forget the Melchitian girl. Your, precisely your union with an heretical woman is an abomination that could never be endured. Touching your relations with the Arabians, and in regard to the question whether it becomes you in your position to accept duties from them, we shall have an opportunity to speak later. When I come again, if you have come to a more sensible conclusion with regard to this woman—you are at liberty to sue for the hand of any Jacobite woman you may desire—then I shall talk to you in a different tone. I offer you then my friendship and

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assistance, instead of the curse of the Church I hold out to you her blessing, the mercy and grace of the Most High, an easy and plain road into the great beyond, and the ecstasy of giving fresh life to the alarmed heart of your deeply afflicted mother. My last word is: you must give up the woman, from whom you have nothing to expect but ruin!"

"I can, and will, and shall not do it, nevertheless!" replied Orion, with determination.

"Then I must and will, and shall cause you to feel how heavy is the curse which I shall hurl upon your head if the extremity and necessity arises!"

"That will be in your power," replied Orion. "But if you decree this extreme against me, then you will force me to seek the blessing, for which my soul intensely longs, more intensely than you can conceive—yes, sire, you will compel me to seek the happiness I need, with her, whom you damn, and on yonder side of the river."

"Dare to do it!" cried the patriarch, and left the room with glowing cheeks but firm step.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BENJAMIN'S FAREWELL.—A STRANGE CHANGE TAKES PLACE IN ORION.

ORION found himself alone in the capacious room, and it seemed to him as though the world around him were vanishing into empty nothingness after a tempest and storm. In the first place he felt only that something terrific had happened to him and threatened to hurl him far beyond the reach of all before which he was accustomed to bow and to consider as sacred.

For the honor and love of his good angel he had declared war against the patriarch, and the power of this man was great, like his presence. Still the picture of his beloved in the eye of the youth towered high and victoriously above the form of the fearful old man, and it seemed to him that his father was an ally in the fight, which he was now to wage alone, and with no one to help him.

And now the young man recalled with the help of his powerful memory and active mind every word that the prelate had spoken. As a cat toys with a mouse, so had the old man, boiling over with zeal for his faith, toyed with him. He had sought to sound him and penetrate his very heart before he came out with that with which he should have begun, and of which he had full knowledge: before he offered his hand for

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the first time, as though he had in his heart no serious reproof for him. Orion determined to hold fast to his faith without him, and not to suffer the two other highest goods of the Christian's soul, love and hope, to be lessened through him.

It appeared that as though by a miracle his mother, in spite of her bleeding heart, had told the ecclesiastical prince nothing concerning his father's curse, and what an instrument this would have been in Benjamin's hand. He thought with deep sympathy of the poor, unfortunate woman, and then a suspicion took possession of him that the patriarch had returned to her, to complain of him and to induce her to make further confessions.

Quite a number of minutes had elapsed since the withdrawal of the prelate, and Orion had permitted his noble guest to go without escorting him, and this must attract attention. This violation of good form, of the uncodified law of society, seemed to the son of an old and respected family, who had drunk in respect for such things with his mother's milk, an insult to himself, and in order to remedy his oversight he started abruptly, arranged his disordered hair, and hastened back into the *viridarium*.

Here his suspicion was destined to be confirmed, for the patriarch's attendants were still standing before the entrance to the fountain-chamber, where his mother was, and Benjamin was just issuing forth from the door.

With dignified politeness, and as though nothing of an unfriendly nature had passed between Orion and himself, the old man accepted his offer of attendance.

In the *viridarium* he inquired of his young host the names of some rare plants, and advised him to have a care for the setting out of shade-trees upon his estates. In the vestibule, by the pilasters, at the sides of the large rear-door there stood the statues of Truth and Justice, both magnificent works of Aristeas of Alexandria, who had lived in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. Justice bore in her hands a balance and a sword, while Truth was looking in a mirror. As the patriarch approached them he exclaimed to the priest who accompanied him:

"Still there!" Then he stopped, and turning half to Orion and half to the priest, said: "Your father, as I perceive, did not regard my hint, that these heathenish figures did not belong in a Christian house, and least of all in one occupied by a public officer. We, indeed, know what they represent, but how easily might an ignorant man mistake the woman with a mirror for Vanity and the one with a balance for Corruption;

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pay what we demand, otherwise—so signifies the sword—otherwise your life!"

With this he smiled, and, advancing, quietly remarked to Orion:

"When I come again—you remember, I presume—and these representations of ancient idolatry no longer offend my eye, I shall be much pleased."

"Truth and Justice," remarked Orion, with subdued voice, "they have stood in this place for nearly five hundred years, and have exercised their sway in this house."

"It were more glorious and more commendable could you affirm that of Him to whom alone the first place in a Christian house belongs; in His kingdom every other virtue thrives of its own accord. The Christian should banish from his dwelling all images; only before the door of his heart he should place upon the one side faith, upon the other humility."

They had reached the court and were now standing by the equipage of the widow Susannah. Orion assisted the prelate to ascend, and when he extended his hand to him to kiss in the presence of several hundred officials and slaves, who had fallen upon their knees, the young man pressed his lips to it gently.

As long as the holy man gave his blessing to the multitude from the side of the open carriage Orion remained standing with head bowed low; he then hastened to his mother.

He had expected to find the unhappy woman exhausted by reason of the excitement that had been connected with the prelate's visit; but he found Nephoris more composed than he had seen her since the death of his father; her eyes, even, that were otherwise so devoid of life, now gleamed with an enthusiasm that surprised Orion. Was she thinking of his father? Had the patriarch succeeded in so animating her pious soul that it rose as it were above itself?

She was dressed to go to church, and asked Orion to accompany her, after she had spoken with enthusiasm of the honor that had been bestowed upon her and the whole house by the visit of the most holy father; and he, although he had planned very different things for the next few hours, promptly accepted her invitation, assisted her into the carriage, and after giving the coachman instructions to drive slowly, took his seat beside her.

On the way he asked her what she had told the patriarch, and her answer might have been very consoling to him, but it filled him with the most serious apprehension in another direction. The mind of this quiet lady, at other times so sensible and sober, must have suffered permanently under the weight

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of her misfortune; for what she said was confused and only half intelligible, but one thing was clear, that she had not confided to the patriarch the curse of his father. The ecclesiastical prince must, to her also, have censured the behavior and conduct of the deceased man, and that had closed her lips. She lamented to her son that Benjamin had never understood her husband, that she was compelled to repress her warm desire to open her heart to him. But in the church, in the presence of her Redeemer, she would succeed in letting him read her heart like an open book. In the house of God—there only—a voice had told her could she find salvation for herself and son; but this voice—she heard it by day and by night—and though it pained to cause him sorrow, still he must hear it; this voice did not cease to command her to tear asunder the bond between him and the Melchite. Yesterday she thought it was her eldest son that was speaking to her, he who died for his Jacobite faith. The voice sounded like his, and called aloud to her that the house of Menas must perish if this Melchite were to make the pure blood of her family turbid. And Benjamin confirmed her apprehensions, and had returned to her for the sole purpose of adjuring her to resist the wicked love of Orion for the daughter of Thomas with all the force of her maternal authority; and as the patriarch commanded the same thing as the voice, it must come from God, and she was bound to obey it.

The old hatred for Paula had appeared again; and one could tell, from her voice, that it became fiercer and fiercer in every sentence in which she was reminded of her.

Orion besought her to control herself, and reminded her of the consent that she had given him by the death-bed of his father; and as his mother commenced to reply to him with sighs and lamentations, they arrived before the church door. He made every effort to quiet her; and because the mild and tender tone of his voice afforded her relief she made an affectionate sign to him and followed him into the church. Behind the *narthex*, the portico of the church, where near a small fountain three penitents were lacerating their backs with lashes in the presence of the people entering the church they had to separate; for the ladies' pews were divided from those of the men by a railing of handsomely carved woodwork. As Nephoris approached her seat she gently shook her head, now bowed upon her breast. She thought of the choice that had been submitted to her by Orion, either to hearken to the commands of the patriarch or to the wishes of her son. How gladly would she have seen her son again in bright spirits; but Ben-

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jamin had threatened her with the loss of her heavenly blessedness if she should give her consent to Orion's marriage with the heretic girl.

Eternal happiness, however, meant for her the finding again and the possessing again of that for which she would sacrifice her son and all else besides that was dear to her without a murmur.

Orion witnessed the service from the family pew, immediately in front of the Hekel or the most holy place where the altar stood, and from which the priest performed divine service. It was separated from the three divisions of the chief nave by a partition ornamented with miserable pictures and gilded decorations, and like the whole structure made neither an attractive nor handsome, nor even an edifying impression. The basilica that had been originally magnificently furnished, had in a collision between the Jacobites and Melchites been plundered by the latter, and the impoverished city had not been able to restore to their venerable church its former grandeur. Orion looked about him on all sides, but nothing that he saw was calculated to inspire or to increase devotion.

The whole congregation was obliged to witness the service standing; and as it usually lasted a very long time, not only the women behind the railing, but the men, too, supported themselves like halt and lame persons on crutches. How discordant did the Egyptian singing sound, ever and anon interrupted by the shrill sound of a metal plate beaten by a mallet. The singing was interrupted by the voices of persons engaged in conversation, and as often as it branched off into a quarrel the priest would, from the Hekel, command silence in loud and vehement tones.

At other times, except when the Lord's Supper was celebrated, the service ended with these liturgical devotions; but at this time of general apprehension for a week past a priest or a monk had ascended the chancel.

Shortly after the youth had taken his seat the sermon commenced, and he recognized with a feeling of sorrow in the hollow-eyed and tattered monk who was preaching a man whom he had more than once met in Nesptah's inn in a state of maudlin intoxication. And this disgusting creature, who with the filth and foulness of his body was pompously displaying himself in the chancel, thundered to the people that the failure of the Nile to rise was the result of their sins, and a punishment of God for their misdoings. Instead of pacifying their troubled hearts and of sympathetically upholding their faith, and of filling their minds with hopes for better times, he repre-

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sented to them in glowing terms the punishment that was awaiting their sinful pusillanimity. The Lord God was inflicting upon them and upon the land a plague of insufferable heat, but that this was like a cool northern breeze when compared with the heat of the fiery furnaces that Satan was kindling for them. Upon earth the burning sun affords light by day, but there below the flames impart no light in order that their fright may never cease whom Satan's minions drive across the bridge that leads to his horrible kingdom, while they lacerate them with spears and pitchforks, beat them with clubs, and make great gashes in their bodies. In the agony of this moment and amid the surging crowds that throng the bridge, mothers will trample their babes, and fathers their daughters beneath their feet. And when those that are damned enter the thorny threshold of the great assembly-room of hell, a fearful and poisonous stench would enter their nostrils which, though suffocating, would lend fresh vigor to their oversensitive nerves like the cool breezes of heaven, and they would feel new tortures with increased sensibility. And then they would hear the thundering of the devil's fiendish yell, and he would suddenly seize them with his horrible grimaces from the grate upon which he reposes, and would squeeze and crush them like grapes between his iron jaws, and would ingulf them in his fiery belly, if they had not already been suspended by their tongues by the imps of Satan in the glowing furnace, or been drawn first through ice, and finally hacked into small pieces upon the devil's anvil, or choked and strangled with cloths and ropes. As compared with the pain which was to be endured there, every pang of the soul was like the kiss of one's beloved. Mothers would hear the brains of their babes roasting in their skulls—

At this loathsome speech of the monk, Orion turned away with a shudder. The curse with which the patriarch had threatened him returned to his mind, and it seemed to him as if the whole hot and gloomy house of God, reeking with the odor of incense, was full of fluttering jackdaws and ugly bats. A feeling of deep disgust took possession of him; and suddenly he felt spring up within him into new life the vigor of youth, a longing for freedom, and a joy in existence, and it seemed to him that a voice from within was calling to him:

"Away with this compulsion and these chains, set thy pinions in motion, oh, winged spirit. Away with this god of terror, who is not the Heavenly Father, whose love embraces humanity. Advance free and unrestrained, supported by thine own strength and guided by thine own will. Forth, bravely forth into free and sunny life. Free! free! But not

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like a slave who, scarcely set at liberty and left to his own resources, betakes himself to the slavery of his own mind, but with motives unrestrained, with sweat upon thy brow restlessly bent upon the attainment of that exalted purpose, to develop and make the best of all that is good and great within this mind and soul. Yes, life is a service! As did the disciples of the Porch, so let me strive after that which they called virtue, for no other purpose than because it is beautiful, because to practice it affords unsullied joy. From this time on let the high aim of my life be relying upon myself to seek after that which is true and to do what I believe to be good and upright. To the two great wishes of my heart—reconciliation with my father, and the possession of Paula—shall from this time forth be added a third—the seeking after the highest aim that is attainable for me and the most vigorous efforts to come as near to it as my strength may permit. The road that leads to it is labor, and the star to guide me and keep me from going astray is my love!"

With glowing cheeks and with heaving breast he glanced around him as though in search of some enemy with whom to measure strength.

The repulsive sermon was finished, and from the song of the congregation there fell upon his ears these words:

"Lord chasten me not because of my transgressions."

Then there fell upon his heart a sense of all that he lacked, and above all the curse of his dying father, and that brave heart sunk upon his breast; and he said to himself that he was too heavily burdened to undertake that bold flight for which he had prepared his wings. The anathema had not yet been taken from him; he still felt burdened by its weight. But with the word "redeemed" there came into his consciousness the image of Him who had borne the sins of the world; and the more deeply he buried himself in the being of the Saviour whom he had loved from childhood up, the more plainly he felt that it would not prejudice the freedom of his will, but would merely be following an old impulse if he were to tell Jesus all that was oppressing him; that love for Him and faith in Him possessed a saving power for his soul also, and so he raised his eyes and heart to Him and confided to Him as to a faithful friend all that was troubling him and clogging him, and besought Him for his assistance. In love to Him he could feel that he was one with Paula, even though her conception of Him was different from his. Thoughtfully he reflected upon the difference between her views and his own. She saw in Christ by the side of His divine a human nature. And as he

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thought upon this conception, which he had recently so heartily loathed, it appeared to him as if the image of the Saviour, from which love and truth shone forth, came nearer to him when he thought that He, the spotless, perfect one, had all the passions of a human being, and that he had wandered among men with all the love for life that they feel, subject to every sorrow, and woe that can torment mortal men, that he rejoiced with them and out of pure love for the wretched race to which He had condescended to make himself known, had subjected himself to unspeakable humiliation, pain, and death with a sorrowful, bleeding, and yet self-sacrificing heart. Ay, such a Christ could be his Saviour likewise.

From an omnipotent ruler He had become the most perfect and most lovable friend, a magnificent, considerate, and faithful brother to whom one would gladly present one's whole heart, and who understood all and was ready to forgive all, even that which had taken place in his, Orion's breast, wounded and panting for relief because He himself, as human, had suffered like a human being.

To-day he, the Jacobite, dared for the first time to acknowledge all this to himself, and not only for Paula's sake—

Vehement blows upon a cracked metal plate awaked him from these reflections; the Lord's Supper, as was the custom at the close of every great Jacobitish service, was being distributed. The bishop advanced before the bar of the Hekel, poured some wine into a silver goblet and broke two pieces of bread that were stamped with the Coptic cross into the wine. He himself there partook of the mixture, and handed it in a spoon to the individual members of the congregation who approached him. After two church-wardens had partaken, Orion received his. Finally the priest rinsed the goblet and drank the dregs also, in order that none of the blessed fluid might be lost.

How the heart of this growing youth had beat when he was for the first time admitted to this most holy of all Christian sacraments! He knew its deep and glorious significance; he had often felt the cleansing, redeeming, and quickening effect of this sacrament urging him on to the attainment of good after enjoying it with his parents and brothers. They used to wander home hand in hand more closely united than ever, and, as it were, freshly clothed in mind and body. And to-day it seemed to him to whom the repulsive form of worship of his childhood gave no offense as though the covenant that he had secretly made with the Saviour had been sealed by the bread and wine, His body and His blood; and as though the Saviour

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with invisible hand had taken from him the guilt and the curse that were burdening him so severely. Deep devotion overcame him, and it seemed to him as if his future life would bring him nearer than ever to God, and that he would labor in love and in the earnest free and conscientious utilization of the talents with which God had intrusted him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CATHARINE AND ARION MEET AND CONVERSE.

ORION had feared the drive home with his mother; but after she had given vent to her complaints about the widow Susannah, who had again to-day during the service given the most striking evidences of her vexation, she turned upon her side and fell fast asleep. With her head supported upon her son's shoulder she finally reached the governor's palace, and Orion's apprehension about the beloved lady found fresh nourishment when he succeeded only with the greatest difficulty in arousing her. He felt her stagger at his side like a drunken person while he led her, supported upon his arm, this time not into the fountain-room, but into her chamber, where she desired to rest herself, and where, so soon as she had stretched herself out, she was overpowered with deep sleep.

Now Orion repaired to the Jew Gamaliel, bought from him a very large and expensive but simply set diamond, and the brother of the Israelite undertook to carry it with him to Constantinople and to deliver it to the widow Heliodora, who, besides, was one of his patrons. In the chamber of the jeweler Orion then addressed a letter to the woman he had formerly loved, in which he begged her in warm and urgent terms to accept the diamond, and in its place to send back to him the emerald by a quick and trustworthy messenger whom the goldsmith Simeon would provide with all that was necessary.

Orion, worn out and hungry, then eat his midday meal alone with the Greek governess Eudoxia, as had been the case for several days past.

The child was not yet permitted to leave her room, which was in one respect at least to the joy of the governess, for eating *tête-à-tête* with the handsome youth afforded the aged heart of this lady great enjoyment. How considerate it was in this rich and proud heir to direct the slaves to offer each dish to her before himself, and how kind it was in him to listen to her when she told him of her youth and of the distinguished families in which she had formerly given instruction! She

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would willingly have given her life for her table companion; however, as no opportunity for such a sacrifice offered itself, she never failed to call his attention to the most attractive delicacies and to see that his room was provided with flowers. Further, she had behaved in the most commendable and self-sacrificing manner toward her pupil since she had been sick, and her grandmother had turned away from her, and since she had observed that Orion had assumed a really paternal and affectionate relation toward his little niece. The young man had found no time to-day to inquire after Maria, and Eudoxia's declaration that she seemed to be more uneasy than she had been yesterday made him so apprehensive that, in spite of the Greek's objections, he arose from the table without waiting for dessert, and went to see in person after the little invalid.

He ascended the steps in a state of great anxiety. There was a heavy weight upon his heart; and as he approached Maria's room he thought to himself with a melancholy smile that he, although in the imperial city, many a respected man and many an admired woman had given way to him because they could not satisfy his exalted demands, he had no one here except this little child with whom he was certain to find sympathy.

Between his knock and the sign to come in quite a while elapsed, and he heard during this interval a hasty running hither and thither. At last he found Maria lying upon a divan near a shady and wide-opened window in pursuance of the doctor's directions. Her lounge was surrounded with blooming plants, and two large bouquets were standing upon the little table by her bedside, one withered and one fresh and unusually pretty. How strangely the child had changed in the last few days! The roundness of her cheeks had disappeared, and her whole pretty little face was, as it were, entirely engrossed by her eyes, which were at other times extraordinarily large, and which to-day seemed to shine with unusual brilliancy. Yesterday when she had been free from fever she had been pale, but to-day her cheeks were all aglow, and, besides, there was noticeable the strange quivering of her lips and the nervous jerking of her shoulder which had entirely disappeared since the day of her grandfather's death, but which was so frequent to-day that Orion took his seat by her with a troubled look upon his countenance.

"Has your grandmother been in to see you?" was his first question; but the only answer he received was a sad shaking of her head.

The new flowers that adorned her room were his present as

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well as the withered ones. But the other fresh bouquet was not his. And so he inquired who had given the flowers, and was not a little astonished to see into what confusion and fresh excitement this question threw his little darling. It must have some connection with the bouquet, that was quite evident, and the young man, who did not desire unnecessarily to excite her already overtaxed nerves, was beginning already to regret that he had asked the question, but did not desire to retract it when the discovery of a fan which he raised up with an exclamation of surprise relieved him of all embarrassment. The blood again rushed into Maria's cheeks, and looking at him beseechingly with her large eyes, she laid her finger upon her lips, but he made a sign to her that he understood all and asked in an under-tone:

"Has Catharine been with you? Susannah's gardener makes up flowers like this. The fan— When I knocked—Is she still here?"

He had guessed correctly, and Maria mutely pointed to the door of the next room.

"But for Heaven's sake, my child," said Orion, still speaking in an under-tone, "what does she want here now?"

"She came over in a boat without letting any one know it," whispered the child. "She made Anubis ask me whether she might come, that she could not stand it any longer without me; and so—she had not done anything to me—I told her 'yes,' and when I heard your knock just now, whst, as quick as lightning, she was in the bedroom."

"And suppose only your grandmother were to meet her?"

"Yes, then—what would become of me. Merciful heavens, Orion, if you only knew how this—this—"

At these words two big tears started to roll down Maria's cheeks, and Orion understood their meaning, and began to smooth her hair affectionately, and said to her, in gentle tones, while he ever and anon looked toward the bedroom:

"I have come really to tell you more about Paula. She loves you very dearly, and invites you to come to see her and to stay with her. But keep this to yourself, child, and don't mention it to a soul, not even to Eudoxia nor to Catharine; for I do not yet know myself whether we shall succeed in getting grandmamma's permission. At any rate we must be very sly and prudent, do you understand? I have only taken you into my confidence in order that you might rejoice in advance and also at night if you are going to be such a stupid little creature again and keep your eyes open all night like a little rabbit instead of going to sleep like a good child. If we have good

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luck, then you will be—just think!—you will be perhaps to-morrow already with Paula. A little while ago I had given up hope of carrying the plan through; but just now—isn't it funny—just now I said to myself all at once, 'It must be carried through!' and so it must."

The tears began to gush down Maria's burning cheeks, and although they flowed full and plenteously, she did not sob, and her bosom remained motionless. Her lips did not move either, but there beamed forth from her moist eyes a look so full of pure and joyous gratitude that Orion felt his own eyes growing dim, and was glad to find something to conceal his emotion; for as Maria seized his hand and impressed a long hearty kiss upon it, her tears moistened his hand, and he exclaimed:

"Just look; as wet as if I had pulled it out of a basin."

He had time to say nothing more, for the door of the bedroom was suddenly thrown open and the thin high voice of the Greek Eudoxia called out:

"But why this reluctance? Of course Maria will be delighted! My child, here I bring you your lost friend! Such a surprise!"

At these words Catharine appeared, whom the governess pushed into the room with a by no means gentle thrust. Eudoxia's face beamed as though she had accomplished an heroic deed; but she was quite frightened to find that Orion was still there.

The now separated betrothed stood face to face. What had happened could not be undone; but, although he received her with merely a dignified bow, and she had to vibrate her fan to and fro in quick nervous motions to conceal her embarrassment, still nothing occurred that could have attracted the attention of an unsuspecting person; yes, Catharine's pretty little face assumed a challenging expression when he inquired after his white poodle, and she replied to him quite coolly that she had chained him in the barn-yard because the patriarch, their guest, did not like dogs.

"He honors a great many people with a similar feeling," replied Orion; and the little humming-bird added, without taking long to think:

"When they deserve it!"

Thus the conversation continued for a short time, but the young man was not in a mood to quietly submit to the sharp sayings of the girl, nor to pay her in her own coin; and so he prepared to withdraw, but before he had gone Catharine ex-

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claimed, after looking out of the window and observing how low the sun had sunk:

"Heavens, how late it is already! I must go; for I dare not be absent from the evening meal. My boat is lying in the fisherman's harbor near yours. If the door of the treasury department is only not closed!"

Orion also glanced at the position of the sun and said:

"To-day is Samitas-day!"

"I know it!" exclaimed Catharine. "It was on that account that Anubis had holiday to-day after twelve o'clock."

"And on the same account," said Orion, "not one soul is at work in the treasury."

This was very bad! For no price did she wish to be seen in the governor's palace, and now she began to think of every turn and corner in the palace with which she was very familiar from her games with Maria, and in doing so her face assumed a lurking expression that was entirely new to Orion, and which caused him displeasure and at the same time anxiety, not for himself but for Maria, to whom no good could come from association with such a companion. Such visits as this should not be repeated often. He determined to let the matter rest in the presence of the child, but to give Catharine the proper hints at once. She could not regain her liberty without his assistance, and so he interrupted her reflections and informed her that he had the keys to the treasury with him, looked to see whether the front hall was free, and conducted her through many passages into the treasury building, which was connected thus with the dwelling-house. It was at this hour as quiet as death in this building, and as Orion stood close by her near the back-door that led into the path to the fisherman's harbor, and after he had already raised the key to open it he let it once more drop to his side, broke for the first time the silence which they had observed during this weird walk, and asked:

"What brought you to Maria, Catharine? Tell me honestly!"

Her heart, that had beat faster since she had found herself alone in this silent, man-forsaken building with Orion, now began to palpitate with the fury of a storm, and a terrific fear, for what, she did not know herself, took possession of her. She had come to the governor's palace for many reasons; but one had outweighed all others: Maria must learn through her that her young uncle and Paula were engaged, for she knew by experience that the child could not keep anything of importance from her grandmother, and that Nephoris did not love Paula was a public secret. She certainly had no idea of her son's

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passionate suit for the hand of the girl from Damascus, but if Nephoris once received information of the fact, then she would do everything in her power—of this she had no doubt—to keep Orion and Paula apart, and so she had told the little child that the people already were saying that these two were betrothed, and that she herself had seen them talking with each other in the garden next to her mother's. To her chagrin Maria had listened to it all very quietly and without showing any surprise. When Orion now asked Catharine what had brought her to the palace, she was only able to reply:

"An irresistible longing for little Maria."

"Of course," began Orion, "but I wanted to ask you to be kind enough not to indulge this longing of yours too often. Your mother does not attempt to conceal her resentment against my mother, and this resentment will be increased if she learns that we encourage you to act contrary to her wishes. You may perhaps have frequent opportunity in the near future of seeing Maria, but I request you earnestly not to speak to her about matters that might excite her. You yourself have seen how excitable she is, and how feeble she looks. Her little heart and her prematurely developed mind must have quiet, and ought not to be aroused by violent impressions such as you are in a position to stir up within her. The patriarch is an enemy to me and my house, and you—I do not say this to offend you—you privately overheard his conversation last night, and perhaps heard all kinds of weighty facts discussed by him, and among others, matters which concern me and my house."

Catharine stood in front of the young man deathly pale. He knew that she had been guilty of eavesdropping, and at what hour, and the fright at this as well as the insufferable consciousness that she had lowered herself in his eyes, confused her. She felt that she had been taken by surprise, had been insulted and threatened; however, she preserved her presence of mind sufficiently to make a prompt reply to her opponent:

"Be not uneasy! I shall not come again. Besides, I would not have come to-day if I could have foreseen—"

"That you would meet me?"

"Perhaps so; but do not lay too much stress upon that! With regard to my eavesdropping—well, yes, I placed myself at the window! Inside I could hear only the half of what was said, and would it not arouse the curiosity of anybody to hear what such prominent men have to say to each other. I have not met such men, if I except your father in Memphis, since Memnon moved away. We women have inherited, as every one knows, a little curiosity from Mother Eve; but we rarely

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carry it to such an extreme as to search for necklaces in the jewelry boxes of our guests. As a criminal, my dear Orion, I have extremely bad fortune! I have deserved this name twice. Thanks to the magnanimous and extensive use that you made of my inexperience, I sinned grievously, so grievously that my whole life is still ruined, and now in a more pardonable manner; yet, in both cases, as you know, I was caught in the act."

"Your reproaches are just," said Orion, gloomily.

"But, child, we both should thank Providence that we were not allowed to wander long in this path of woe. I have already besought your forgiveness once, and I now ask again for it. That is not satisfactory to you—I can see from your looks—and I do not blame you. It is more welcome to you, perhaps, if I acknowledge to you again that no misdeed has perhaps been more severely and more fiercely punished than mine."

"Is it possible?" said Catharine, inquisitively, and then continued, while she kept her fan in active vibration.

"But you really look anything else than broken; and have you succeeded in winning a certain 'other lady'—Paula, if I am not mistaken?"

"Stop instantly!" said Orion, interrupting her, and started to put the key in the door; she, however, stepped in his way, and, threatening him with her finger, exclaimed:

"So then! Now I know it positively. And further, you were perfectly right with your rude: 'Stop instantly!' Your love affairs do not trouble me any longer, yet I presume I may inquire about something quite different; for it is a matter that concerns me alone: how did you manage to see over our fence? Anubis is scarcely a head smaller than you, and—"

"And he is your pattern?" interrupted Orion, who could not repress a smile, but perceived that what he had meant in a sincerely serious way had but little effect upon Catharine.

"In spite of your praiseworthy prudence, I beg you in future cases to lay this carefully up in your mind: What is true in his case is not true in every case, and besides pedestrians, there are tall, thin people, who sometimes ride on horse-back."

"You were, then, the nocturnal rider?"

"Who could not resist looking up at your window."

At these words she started back as though terrified at him, her eye sparkled brilliantly, but only for one short moment, then she asked sharply and with both hands upon the compressed feathers of her fan:

"Is that meant for a jest?"

"Of course not," said he, calmly, "for although you have ground to be angry with me—"

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"I have given you so far no ground on earth to be angry with me, none on earth!" she said, and interrupted him in an excited manner. "I am the one who has been offended, maltreated. I alone, and you must acknowledge that you are my debtor and that I have a right to demand something from you."

"Do it," added Orion. "I am at your service."

She then looked him straight in the face and asked:

"In the first place, have you told any one else that I—'

"That you were guilty of eavesdropping? No, not a mortal soul."

"And will you promise me never to betray it?"

"Heartily! What have you now to ask secondly after your 'in the first place?'"

The answer to this question did not come promptly; it was evidently a difficult thing for the little humming-bird to give it, but she finally commenced with down-cast eyes:

"I should like—you will consider me more foolish than I really am, however— Yes, I shall, nevertheless ask you, although it will simply be a new humiliation for me. The truth I must know, and if anything is to you still holy, then you must swear to me before I put the question, by this most holy thing, to answer me, not as if I were a foolish girl, but—do you hear?—as though I were the great Judge at the last day!"

"How solemn that sounds!" said Orion. "Furthermore, I must remark that there are questions which do not concern us alone, and if you ask me such—"

"No, no," replied Catharine, "what I mean is a matter that concerns no one but you and me."

"Then I can see no reason why I should not comply with your request," he replied. "But I should like to ask a small return from you. As it appeared to you, so it appears to me, desirable to hear about what so important a man as the patriarch converses, and as I place myself at your command—"

"I thought," said she, smiling, and interrupting him, "that you would first feel bound to discharge, to some extent at least, the debt you owe me; however, I shall not demand any special magnanimity, and the little that I heard can be quickly told. Besides, it will be quite a matter of indifference to you. I shall fulfill your wish, and you in turn promise me—"

"To tell you the whole truth."

"As certainly as you hope for the forgiveness of your sins."

"As certainly as I hope for such forgiveness."

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"Very well then!"

"What do you desire to hear?"

"No, no, not yet. I can't begin. First let me tell you what you desire to know, then open the door, and if I desire to withdraw, then let me go, without saying one word further or asking another question. Hand me a chair; I must take a seat."

And it really seemed that she needed rest, as for some minutes she had appeared pale and exhausted, and her fingers trembled while she wiped her face with her handkerchief.

As soon as she was seated she commenced to narrate what she had overheard, and as she continued speaking rapidly, without expression, and in an absent-minded manner, Orion listened with rapt attention, for what he heard appeared to him to be of the greatest significance and importance.

He had by order of the patriarch been watched. The latter had known already on Wednesday that he had been in Fostat, and had visited the Arabian commander-in-chief. Nothing else had been said about him except the fear expressed that he intended to give up the faith of his fathers and to go over to the infidels.

Far more important were the facts that Orion learned about the agreements made between the patriarch and the representative of the caliph. The latter had insisted upon a diminution of the number of cloisters, monks and nuns, who were supported by pious funds and legacies, who worked at all sorts of trades according to the rule of Pachomius, and who, by reason of their gratuitous support, were in a position to supply most of the necessities of ordinary life, from the house-mat to the shoe upon one's foot, far more cheaply than ordinary mechanics in the country and in the town. The great majority of these poor people had been already ruined by this competition, and Amr, who saw that the Arabian leather manufacturers, weavers, rope-makers and the like were threatened with a similar fate, had determined to take energetic and decisive steps against this cloister labor.

The resistance of the patriarch had been persistent and vigorous, but he was compelled finally to sacrifice nearly the half of the cloisters and convents; however, nothing had been yielded without a consideration, for Benjamin knew very well what stupendous difficulties it was competent to him as head of the Church to throw in the way of the new government. Accordingly, it was left to the patriarch himself to designate the cloisters that were to be closed, and the prelate, as a matter of course, first laid hand on the last of the Melchitian

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religious houses, and among them upon the Convent of St. Cecilia, situated near the house of Rufinus. This convent was to be closed within three days, and its possessions were to fall to the Jacobite Church. And this was to be done in all possible secrecy, because it was to be feared, inasmuch as the people were already in an intense state of excitement, by reason of the failure of the Nile to rise, that the poor people would defend the rich sisters of the convent, to whom they were indebted for so many acts of kindness and benevolence. Opposition also was to be expected from the senate of the city against their determination, which the deceased Mukaukas had designated as unjust and injurious to the best interests of the Church. The excommunicated orthodox nuns were to be distributed as lay-sisters among the Jacobite cloisters, as had often been done before; the abbess, however, who, on account of her high birth, her cleverness and her extensive influence, might arouse against Benjamin all the ecclesiastical princes of the whole east, if she were left at liberty, was to be transported to a distant Ethiopian convent, from which no attempt at escape would be conceivable.

This narrative lasted only a few minutes, and was recited with apparent indifference. Of what importance could the removal of orthodox cloisters and the expulsion of heretical nuns be to Catharine or to Orion, the brother of two martyrs to Melchitian violence?

Orion showed no sign how deeply interested he was in what he had heard, and when Catharine arose and, completely exhausted, pointed to the lock and said, as if grieved at having wasted so much precious time: "That is in the main all that I heard."

"All?" repeated Orion, while he unlocked the door.

"Certainly all," said Catharine, anxiously. "What I wanted to ask you—whether I shall learn it or not—it makes no difference—yes, it would perhaps be better. Most assuredly. Let me go!"

But he did not obey her, but said to her in a kind tone of voice:

"Ask your question; I shall answer it willingly."

"Willingly?" she repeated, shrugging her shoulders incredulously. "As a matter of fact, your conscience ought to prick you sorely when you look at me; but that is the way; things do not happen as they should in Memphis and in the world. What difference does it make to you men what you have made of a poor girl like me? Do not think I desire to reproach you. God forbid! I am not even angry with you. If any one,

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assuredly I can console myself about such things. Don't you think so too? I ought to be very happy; I shall certainly succeed! I am very rich, and not at all ugly, and hundreds will come to sue for my hand. Oh, I am an enviable creature! I have already had one suitor, and the next one will certainly be more constant and will not discard me so ruthlessly as the first! Am I not right?"

"I hope so," replied Orion, seriously. "Although you give me such a bitter draught—"

"Well, what?"

"I can only repeat that I must swallow it, because I am in the wrong. Nothing could make me so happy as to be able, to some small extent, to remedy the wrong I have done you."

"Oh, no!" she interrupted him, scornfully. "Our wishes dare not go so far. Everything between us is past and forever gone. If you ever were anything to me, to me you are now nothing, absolutely nothing. We shared with each other a small bit of the past, but it was short; but for me—do you know?—it was of grave importance. It ripened with wonderful rapidity that young thing, whom even yesterday—I know perfectly well—you still considered a mere child, and alas! besides, made her much more wicked than you have any conception of."

"That would cause me the most intense pain," added Orion. "There is no excuse for my behavior; but you yourself know that in the first place the wish of our mothers—"

"Had destined us for each other, you mean? Quite right! And did you merely to please Lady Nephoris take me into your arms that time under the acacia-trees, and call me your all in all, your darling, and your rosebud? Did you," and here she raised her voice, and her eyes flashed with passionate excitement, "did you—it is just this I desired to ask you, and this I must know—did you lie that time too, or did you love me from the bottom of your heart, at least for those few, short moments there under the trees, did you love me as deeply as you now love—I hate to mention her name—as you now love your 'other one.' The truth, Orion, the whole truth. You have sworn to tell the truth!"

At these words her lips became silent, but the look of her moist, glistening eyes, with their beseeching expression, told him plainly and without disguise, that her heart still belonged to him, and that she calculated upon his generous nature and expected an affirmative answer. She pressed her beautiful arm hard against her heaving bosom, as though she was trying to keep its stormy billows within bounds. Her delicately cut

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face was again, as it were, bathed in fresh color, at times a tender roseate hue and then again a deep crimson. Her small mouth, which had just spoken such bitter words, smiled, as if ready to give sweet reward for the comforting and consoling word, for which her whole being pined, and her bright eyes, now filled with tears, did not cease to beg so touchingly, so beseechingly! What an insnaring picture of helpless, affectionate and charming youth and loveliness!

"As deeply as you now love the 'other one!'" and "You have sworn to tell the truth!" resounded ever and anon within the inner ear of the youth. All that was weak in him urged him violently to again make good all the wrong of which he had been guilty against this pure and unhappy young creature; yet those words: "As deeply as you now love the 'other one!'" and "You have sworn to tell the truth!" gave him strength to remain firm, and he who felt himself now called to impart sympathy and consolation, stretched out his hands to her like one praying for help, and exclaimed:

"Yes, Catharine, as pure and as charming as you now are, you were also then; but I—though I loved you, a great and overpowering love, one that fills one's whole being, exists but once. Leave out of the question all that occurred later. Formulate your question just a little differently, ask it again, but permit me to tell you—"

But he had no time to speak another word, for before he could stop her, she had darted by him, and like a frightened deer had sped away into the open air and toward the fisherman's harbor.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ORION TALKS WITH THE DOCTOR, AND ASKS RUFINUS'S AID IN AN IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING.

ORION was alone and followed her sadly with his eyes. Was this his father's curse? It seemed that every one who loved him must reap pain and misfortune for it! He shuddered, but his youthful vigor and his power of resistance were strong enough to enable him soon to become master of himself and these torturing thoughts. What an opportunity was now offered him to prove his strength! During Catharine's narrative the courageous and aspiring youth had already formed a plan to attempt to rescue the nuns. The greater the dangers that the accomplishment of this plan might bring with it, ay, the more impracticable it appeared at first glance, the more

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welcome it was to him just at this time. With joyous heart and mind ready for the fray, he slammed the door behind him and emerged into the open air. It was already growing dark. The doctor was most probably with Maria, and he had determined, with his assistance, to get her away from the governor's palace. Until he knew that Maria was safe in Rufinus's house with Paula, he could not begin the undertaking that now lay before him. He called to a slave on the steps: "My one-horse cart with the Persian trotter!" and then he entered the room of the little girl at the same moment that a female slave brought in lighted lamps.

Neither she nor Philippus observed him at first, and he heard her asking the doctor, who was holding her wrist between his fingers:

"What on earth is the matter with you to-day? Heavens!" —the light of the lamp at this moment shone full in his face— "how pale and sad you look! Just wait a moment: a few minutes ago I kneaded together out of wax an awfully funny little fellow—"

She wanted to enliven the doctor by this ridiculous work of art, as he had always been so kind to her, but as she bent forward to seize it, she noticed her uncle, and exclaimed:

"Philippus has come to cure me, but he looks as if he needed his own medicine. Take care, you will have to take that bitter, brown medicine you gave me yesterday, and then you will know for once what tastes badly!"

However kindly this exclamation was meant, no attention was paid to it by the two men, who saluted each other silently, and with a distant bow; but Orion would have noticed without the child's remark what a change had taken place in the doctor since yesterday. Apparently without observing the presence of Orion, he asked Maria a few more questions, directed Eudoxia to abide by the prescriptions he had formerly made, and then gave a hasty farewell intended for all that were present indifferently. Orion, however, did not acknowledge it, but with an affectionate glance at the little girl, said, in a tone of request:

"Hither for just one word!"

This caused Philippus to turn toward the child, and when the eyes of the rivals met, they knew that in one respect at least they were agreed and felt alike.

The doctor had not remained in ignorance of the kindness with which Orion had taken little Maria under his protection, and so he followed him into the room, which he now occupied,

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and which, as Phillippus knew, had formerly been occupied by Paula.

"In the service of duty," he kept repeating to himself over and over again, in order to remain composed, and to comprehend, at least in general, what the musical voice of the handsome man said to him, what he narrated to him with a warmth and in a beseeching tone, of which he had not believed him capable. Philippus had already known for a long time in what a lamentable manner the grandmother had turned away from her own grandchild, and considered Orion's desire to move the child out of the palace only too justifiable; but when he learned that she was to be intrusted to Paula's protection, he moved convulsively and glanced so gloomily at the floor that Orion quickly guessed what was going on within him. In fact the doctor had said to himself that the child was merely a pretext to the lover for gaining more frequent access to his beloved, and he had already sprung up (unable to repress this apprehension) to give it expression, when Orion took the words from his lips, and with downcast eyes, said, with an expression of modesty and sincerity: "For the sake of the child, only for Maria's sake—by my blessed father—"

Thereupon the doctor shook his head, approached his opponent and murmured, in a hollow-sounding voice:

"For the sake of this child I might do and leave undone a great deal. Nowhere could better care be taken of the child than in the house of Rufinus and with Paula, but if I could think," and now he raised his voice, and his eye assumed a weird and threatening glance, "if I could think that this holy and endangered innocent was only a bridge—"

"No, no!" said Orion, interrupting him impulsively. "Once more the sacred assurance, that I have no other desire than the rescue of the child, and as so much has already been said, one word can not make much difference one way or another! To you the house of Rufinus stands wide open day and night; me, if everything turns out as I expect, the near future will find far from here, from Memphis, from the daughter of Thomas. A knavish trick, more I dare not say, something ignominious is about to be executed, and I propose to attempt to prevent it at the risk of my life. You, you all shall lose the right to suspect me again of actions and thoughts that are as deeply repulsive to my nature as they are to yours. You and I are striving, do not deceive yourself, after the same prize, and have become opponents, but why should the child suffer the consequences of this? Forget it for the child's sake,

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and this will magnify your value in her—you know full well —in her eyes."

"My value?" exclaimed the doctor, scornfully. "What by chance makes the deeper impression upon the wax of a maiden's soft heart, it may be either a crime or an heroic deed, value does not determine, but it is determined in the same manner as the blind girl Fortune distributes her gifts or as a nose, a chin or an eye is shaped, but," and this he said to Orion as though he were beside himself, "but accursed may I be, when I ascertain, how we came to discuss this subject! Has my folly been promenading the streets with bosom bare, exposing itself to the people? How do you know what I feel? Has she perhaps been discussing with you her ridiculous lover? It makes no difference! You know already, or will learn to-morrow, who has won the cock-fight. Just turn your eyes upon me! Heart-breakers do not have such faces as this Thersites who now stands before you. Good luck to the winner of the prize, and as to the other matter—as it perhaps must be, till to-morrow!"

With these words he hastily advanced toward the door, but Orion held him back, besought him to forget his resentment for the present, declared solemnly that Paula had not betrayed to him one word of his affection, that he on the contrary had suffered pangs of jealousy, because he had seen him with her so late yesterday, and urged him to continue to vituperate him, if it afforded his heart relief, but for the sake of all that was good not to withdraw his help and aid from the innocent and courageous child.

The humane heart of the doctor could not shut itself to this request, and when at length he prepared to withdraw with the happy, but still painful conviction that his fortunate rival had become more worthy of his beloved, he had agreed with him to recommend to Lady Nephoris, whom he supposed to be suffering from a slight mental disturbance, that the young child be intrusted to the care of a physician near the city, who was a friend of his, on the ground that the air in the palace was dangerous for her.

As soon as Philippus left, Orion drove to the house of Rufinus, and after a brief explanation that a matter of great importance had brought him thither, the old man requested him to follow him into his office. But the young man retained him a moment in order first to make arrangements with him and the ladies touching the reception of little Maria.

"Gradually the whole of the governor's palace is being transplanted into our garden!" exclaimed Rufinus. "As for

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me, I am delighted, and you, my old woman, what do you say?"

"Of course I am too," she replied. "Besides, neither you nor I have anything to say about it; she is going to be Paula's guest."

"If she were only here," added the young girl; "for who can tell whether your mother, Orion— There is a dangerous Melchitian atmosphere here."

"Leave that for Philippus and me to take care of!" said the latter. "You just ought to have seen how happy the child was!"

He then drew Paula aside, and asked her, hastily:

"Am I too hopeful? Does your heart belong to me? Come what may, can I still count upon you, upon you and your love?"

"Yes, yes!" was the reply that seemed to well up from the lowest depths of her heart, and he, breathing again freely, followed the old man with feelings of peace and joy.

In the brightly lighted office he told Rufinus, without mentioning Catharine's name, all about the patriarch's plan against the Convent of St. Cecilia. Of what interest to him were these heretical nuns! But it seemed to him, since his memorable visit with his mother to the church, that it was his duty to defend all that was right, and to take up arms against all that he considered wrong. Furthermore, he knew with what ardor and determination his father had opposed the patriarch in the interests of this very convent, and finally he had heard how dear this convent and its occupants were to his beloved Paula, and so he joyfully prepared to forget himself amid fresh deeds of heroism, and to prove his strength.

The old man listened to him with ever-increasing astonishment and terror, and arose from his seat after Orion had finished his narrative, with a look of helplessness and despair; but the young man spoke to him words of encouragement, and told him that he had not come to bring distressing news, but to take counsel with him how they might save the innocent nuns. At these words this old friend of humanity and experienced traveler pricked up his ears, and like the old war-horse in the plow, when he hears the blast of the trumpets, begins to rear and arch his neck as nobly and proudly as he was wont to do amid all the brilliant trappings of war in former times, so Rufinus raised himself to his full height, his old eyes began to flash, and like a fiery youth, full of enthusiasm and strength, he exclaimed:

"That is right, and I am with you in the matter, and not

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as adviser. No, no, with head and hand and foot, with my whole body! And you, young man, you! I saw from the very beginning what was in you, in spite—in spite— But, as sure as man is the measure of all things, he who enters the kingdom of virtue by devious and tortuous paths often becomes a better citizen of that realm than one who came into the world in the midst of it. It is already late, but evening prayer has not yet begun, and I shall find the abbess still up. Have you a proposition to make?"

"Yes! Day after to-morrow at this time—"

"Why not to-morrow?" said the fiery old man, interrupting him.

"Because in twelve hours we can not complete the preparations that are necessary."

"Well, very well!"

"Day after to-morrow evening, then, a large boat—not one of ours—will lie ready on the shore of the convent garden. I shall accompany the ladies as far as Dumiat on the sea. I shall send thither to-night a mounted messenger, and have a sea-vessel chartered for the fugitives through the agency of my cousin Columella, the great ship-owner of the city. This ship will convey them whithersoever the abbess shall command."

"Splendid! magnificent!" exclaimed the old man, with enthusiasm. He then seized his hat and cane, but his expression suddenly changed, and his beaming countenance became very serious. With measured dignity he advanced toward the young man, whose surprise was now great, looked at him with an expression of paternal kindness, and said:

"I remember what misfortune fell upon your family through the instrumentality of our fellow-believers, ay, of the fellow-believers of those whom you are now bravely and wisely about to defend, and this, young man, this is noble, yes, this is great. In you, whom they have represented to me as a young man of the world, with extensive information, I have, for the first time, found that after which, during years of wandering I have vainly sought among the pious and virtuous, the self-sacrificing willingness to rescue an enemy, one differing from us in matters of faith, from dire necessity. But you are young, Orion, and I am old. The deed alone rejoices you. I see its consequences. Do you know what will await you if it is found out what assistance you have rendered to the game that was already in the patriarch's net? Have you reflected that Benjamin, the most unrelenting and besides most powerful of our Jacobite haters and persecutors, will pursue you then as his

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mortal enemy with all the frightful means over which he has control?"

"I have considered it all," replied Orion.

Then Rufinus laid his left hand upon Orion's shoulder, and his right hand upon his head, and exclaimed:

"Then take at the outset an old man's blessing for this, ay, a father's."

"A father's," repeated Orion, softly, and he felt a thrill of joy flow into his soul and body, and in deep emotion his head sunk on the old man's heart.

They embraced each other thus for a moment; then Rufinus released himself and hastened to the abbess. Orion betook himself to the ladies, whose curiosity had been aroused to the highest pitch when they saw the old man disappear through the gate leading into the convent garden.

Mme. Johanna was too restless to sit still, Pul gave absent-minded answers, when Orion and Paula, who had an endless amount to talk about, attempted now and then to draw her into the conversation. Once she drew a deep sigh, and when her friend asked: "What is the matter with you, child?" she replied: "There must be something serious the matter; I feel it. If Philippus were only here!"

"We are all, God be praised, in excellent health," said Orion; but she promptly replied:

"Oh, yes, blessed be the Saviour!" But she thought at the same time: "You think that he is merely useful for healing the sick; but all will not go well until he is here."

Each one thought that something unusual and ominous was about to happen, and when the old man at length returned, the expression upon his face confirmed the suspicion.

Quietly and seriously he laid his hat and cane down; then he drew his wife affectionately to him and said: "You must now, as you have so often already done, show courage and composure, my old woman. I have taken upon myself a serious duty."

Johanna became deathly pale, and while she clung closer to her husband, besought him not to keep her longer in suspense, but to speak. Her whole frame trembled, and big tears rolled down her cheeks. She foresaw that it would take her husband away from her and her child in the service of, and in the interests of other people, and at the same time she knew that she could not prevent it. But even if she had had the power, she would have found strength not to thwart him, because she always understood him, and with him recognized as

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necessary for his inner happiness that which drew him from the narrow circle of his house out into the wide world.

He perceived what was going on within her, and it gave him pain, but he did not allow himself to be led astray. He, who had always endeavored to heal every suffering animal, had accustomed himself to seeing those whom he loved most suffering for his sake.

Marriage, he said to himself, ought not to prevent a man from following his deep-set convictions, and with this proud name he would justify in his own eyes and in those of his wife that to which frequently he was drawn by nothing but a passion for traveling and a thirst for action. Even without this motive he would have done all he could for the threatened nuns, but it filled him with still greater zeal for the noble and dangerous work of rescue.

The frightful fate of the poor sisters and the thought of seeing them banished out of their sight caused the ladies the bitterest pain, and thus the men witnessed the flowing of copious tears; but they also had the joyful sight of seeing three women firm and as determined as themselves to risk all, and to permit those they loved to risk all, for the purpose of bringing to naught a deed that filled them with horror and disgust.

Mme. Johanna did not raise one word of objection when her husband declared his intention of accompanying the fugitive sisters, and when Rufinus, with glowing eyes, began to praise Orion's prudence and courageous determination, Paula hastened to him and with joy and pride extented both hands to him. It seemed to the young man almost as if his wings were beginning to grow, and this ominous evening became to him one of the happiest of his life.

The abbess had consented to his plan, and had made some additional suggestions. Two lay-sisters and one nun were to remain behind. The former were to undertake the nursing of the sick, to ring the bells as usual, and to sing, in order that the departure of the others should remain unobserved, and Johanna, Paula and Pul were to lend them their assistance. When the young man was on the point of departing, Rufinus inquired whether, under existing circumstances, it was still prudent to bring Maria into his house; he for his part doubted its propriety. Johanna was also of this opinion. Paula on the other hand, declared that she considered it better to expose the child to dangers that at least were still distant and scarcely to be feared, than to let it perish body and soul in the governor's palace. Pul was on her side, but the girls had to submit to the judgment of the others.

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CHAPTER XXX.

PHILIP AND HORUS APOLLO CONVERSE.—ORION PREPARES FOR HIS UNDERTAKING.

THE physician Philippus, after his conversation with Orion, hastened through the city and paid so little heed to the people whom he encountered, and to the processions that with loud singing marched by him, for the purpose of beseeching Heaven at length to decree that the Nile should rise, that he ran into more than one passer-by and received the reproaches of many a man and woman.

He entered some of the houses, but neither the patients nor the other occupants recognized in the gruff, harsh man the gentle doctor and friend, who at other times dealt so sympathetically and with such encouraging tenderness with the sufferers, and who often would throw the little children into the air, give them a kiss, or good-humoredly tease them. To-day he caused even the grown people embarrassment and apprehension. For the first time his beloved duty was to him an onerous burden; a suffering patient seemed to him a tormenting spirit which had leagued itself with the rest against his peace of mind. What affectionate return did he receive from men that he, for their sakes, should lose the joy of existence and his rest by night?

Rufinus was right!

At the present time one lives only to cause sorrow to his neighbor; the more stolid the brow with which one practices selfishness and looks neither to the right nor to the left, the better one succeeds! Fool that he was, to allow his own peace of mind to be disturbed by the woes of a stranger, and his progress in science to be impeded!

Engrossed in such bitter feelings, he entered a neat little house near the harbor in which a brave pilot, surrounded by his wife and children, lay dying, and here he suddenly became himself again, here he brought to bear all that he possessed of knowledge and tenderness, and he left the house with bleeding heart and empty purse; but no sooner was he again in the open air than his old feelings returned with renewed vehemence. Now it was but too evident; in spite of his firm determination to sacrifice himself no more for others he had to do it nevertheless!

The impulse was stronger than he. Like the drunkard his

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drinking so he could not cease suffering with the afflicted, sowing his best seed to reap no harvest in return! He had been created to be made a means of; this was his fate!

With head bowed down he entered the office of his old friend, who was still sitting as he had found him yesterday, at his study-table, beneath which a slave was snoring, awaiting his master's commands.

With that beautiful Greek salutation: "Rejoice!" which today sounded like, "May you suffocate!" he threw his outer garment down, and in reply to the old man's counter-salutation and anxious exclamation:

"How strangely you look, Philippus!" he said, grimly. "Like a man who deserves to be trodden under-foot rather than welcomed; like a simpleton who has again allowed his nose to be twisted; like a dog that licks the hand of the clown that has beaten him unmercifully!" With this he threw himself upon the couch and began to narrate to Horus Apollo what had occurred between Orion and himself. "And the worst of it all is," he concluded, "that the man seemed almost attractive to me, that he really seems to me upon the highway to become a first-rate man, and I no longer felt the impulse at the mere thought of his stretching out his hand toward Paula to cast him into the first convenient lime-furnace. But," and here he raised himself up impulsively, "although I am lending him my aid to bring the poor child away from this insane old hag, I will not, I can not remain Maria's doctor. There are plenty of quacks around this corpse of a nest, and she can choose herself one among them. I—I—"

"You will further tend the little child!" said Horus Apollo, interrupting him coolly.

"For the purpose of having my heart daily lacerated with needles?" cried the doctor, as he approached the old man with vehement gestures. "Do you think I have any desire to come daily in contact with the betrothed of this fellow, and to allow the barb to be twisted around in my bloody wound often twice a day?"

"I anticipate an entirely different result from these frequent visits," said Horus. "You will accustom yourself to look upon Paula as that alone which since yesterday she can be for you: a lovely young woman such as Egypt can offer by the thousands, the betrothed of another man."

"Yes, if this heart of mine were a dog of the chase, that meekly lies down when his master gives the word of command 'down'!" said Philippus with a burst of derisive laughter. "It is settled, I must away, away from Memphis, and for aught I

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care away from this world of wretchedness! Ay, and near to her to find my peace again. Oh, my precious lost peace!"

"And why should you not succeed in doing so? For every man a thing is only what it appears to him. But listen to me! I had completed a thesis touching the old and new calendar, and my instructor requested me to lecture upon it in the museum—if the present school of logomachy at Alexandria deserves that name still—but I was loath to consent, because I knew that the presence of so many learned hearers would embarrass me. Then the master advised me to imagine that my audience was not composed of human beings, but out of a mass of cabbage-heads. The idea commended itself to me; I followed his advice and in this way I forgot my embarrassment, and my lecture flowed like oil."

"An excellent story," replied Philippus, "but I do not perceive—"

"You must, it means to say," said the old man, interrupting him, "make out of your most charming beloved if not a cabbage-head then a creature with which your heart has nothing further to do. Summon up your strength and you will succeed."

"If the heart were a number, and passion nothing but the construction of calendars!" cried the doctor. "You are a wise man, and your parchment rolls and tablets have protected you like embankments and walls against passion!"

"Who knows!" rejoined the old man. "At any rate passion would never have gotten such control over me as to cause me, for the sake of a woman who despised my love, to imbitter for my friend and father the few days that are still granted him to pursue his wanderings upon earth. Will you promise me to rave no more of flight from Memphis and of other such matters?"

"Teach me first to measure my power of self-control."

"Will you at least try to exercise it?"

"Yes, for your sake."

"Will you promise me still to care for this little girl, who, in spite of her birth, is dear to me?"

"As long as I can stand daily contact with her—you know full well—"

"Let that be an agreement. Come now and let us translate a few more passages."

The two friends remained at work until quite late; and when the old man was along he thought to himself:

"As long as he can be of service to the child he will not

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leave; and by that time I shall have dug the grave of the accursed siren."

* * * * * * *

The next morning early Orion had his hands full. Before it was light he had dispatched two faithful couriers to Dumial, and intrusted to each a letter with instructions to hold in readiness a sailing-vessel for the fugitives. One was to set out three hours later than the other, in order that the plan might not suffer, were anything to happen to the one or the other.

His first walk took him to the harbor, and he soon succeeded in hiring a strong and capacious boat from Dumial, the captain of which, a trustworthy and clever man, promised him to keep their contract secret, and to be at his service to-morrow from noon on. Having taken counsel with himself along the way, he betook himself immediately to the treasury, and there, with the assistance of Nilus, he made his will, which on the following day was to be legally executed before a notary and attested by witnesses.

He made his mother, little Maria, and Paula his heirs in chief. He left large sums as legacies to the hospitals and orphan asylums of the land, as well as to the Church, in order that it might pray for the salvation of his soul, and another large sum to Nilus, the secretary of the treasury, "the most just among the judges of his house." Eudoxia the Greek was also remembered, and finally he provided for the liberation of all the slaves of the house and bequeathed to them one of the largest estates in Upper Egypt in order that they might not suffer for necessities, providing that it should be worked for the common benefit of all. He increased the already handsome portions that his father had bestowed upon the faithful servants and freedmen of the family.

This work required several hours; and Nilus, who reduced it to proper form and wrote it down as it was dictated to him, did it with deep emotion and astonishment at the circumspect prudence and goodness of the young man, whom he had considered as lost since he had seen him desecrate the tribunal of justice. When Orion directed that the will should be opened in case he had not returned from a journey upon which he proposed to enter to-morrow, four weeks after the execution of the same, the old man perceived that the last cion of the house in whose service he had grown gray proposed to expose himself to great dangers, still in his modesty he did not venture a question and his master did not take him into his confidence.

As the two men entered the vestibule, Anubis, the bookkeeper, the foster-brother and friend of little Catharine, w

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standing there, but Nilus did not observe him; and while he kissed Orion's hand, that had been extended to him for the purpose of taking leave, and the latter had commanded him to come again to-morrow evening before his departure to say farewell, young Anubis, who had respectfully, yet with ears wide open, stepped aside, dutifully opened the heavy iron door. Exhausted and hungry, Orion inquired after his mother, and when he heard that she had lain down he betook himself to the dining-room to take a light repast. Although the hour for breakfast had just come it was easy to see that Eudoxia the Greek had been awaiting him with impatience. A momentous piece of news was weighing her heart down, and before Orion had crossed the threshold and saluted her she called out to him:

"Do you know already? Have you already heard?"

Then she began, encouraged by his short negation, to hastily narrate that Lady Nephoris had determined, at the request of the doctor, who had just been there, to send her and Maria to the house of a friend of Philippus where they could get purer air, and further, that they were go to-day or at latest to-morrow.

At this news Orion involuntarily started. He had not anticipated that the doctor would come so soon, and now he had again been the cause of that which since yesterday evening no longer seemed advisable.

"Extremely unpleasant!" he murmured to himself, while a slave handed him a broiled chicken with asparagus.

"Isn't it splendid? And it may be that we shall even have a trip to the country!" she replied, with a languid look as she drew a long piece of asparagus through her teeth.

At that glance and those words Orion felt as if he begrudged the old fool the tempting vegetable, and his voice did not sound particularly friendly when he replied:

"City or country are both perfectly indifferent; the only question is, what is best for the little girl?"

Upon his remarking that he was going to take a trip to-morrow, Eudoxia screamed, let a large piece of asparagus fall into her lap, and mournfully exclaimed:

"Oh, then—then all is lost!"

But he, on the contrary, rejoined in a tone of reproof:

"Then rather does your duty of devoting yourself wholly and entirely to the child first begin. You know full well that the child has become an object of dislike to her own grandmother. Bestow upon her your love as you have already commenced to do, be to her a mother, and if you are really attached to her then give proof of it by this means. As far as I

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am concerned you will find me grateful, and not with words only. To-morrow go to the treasure and Nilus will give you the only thing whereby I can now show my appreciation. Devote with perfect peace of mind your whole strength to the fostering of the child; for I have remembered to provide for your old age."

Amid the overwhelming expressions of gratitude that Eudoxia showered upon him he arose and betook himself to his mother. She was still resting; but this time he nevertheless caused his presence to be announced, and she received him gladly and had even been expecting his visit for some time. She was resting in a half-reclining position upon a divan in a chamber that was protected from the scorching rays of the sun, and she confided to her son her determination to follow the advice of the doctor, and to intrust the child to the care of one of his friends. All this had a sleepy and dispassionate sound; but as soon as Orion opposed her and begged her to keep the child in the palace she became excited, and with the exclamation: "Is that your wish? Can you make such a request of me?" surveyed him with a look of astonishment from head to foot. Then she continued:

"Everything seems now to be reversed. Old age no longer forgets, but youth has a short memory. You have already for a long time been busy with quite different matters; but I still remember who it was that made the last moments of him—of my dead husband—upon earth a veritable hell at the moment that he was in full view of heaven!"

At these words her bosom began to heave with a quick convulsive motion attended by gentle but tearless sobs, and Orion did not venture to make any further opposition. He attempted to calm her with peaceful words, and when she had become more composed he informed her that he expected to have to leave her for a short time for the purpose of looking after his interests upon his estates, and this news afforded her much joy. To be alone, entirely alone and unobserved seemed now an inestimable privilege. The little white spherules afforded her much more satisfaction, raised her spirits higher than association with friends. They brought her dreams whether she were sleeping or waking, and these were a thousand times more beautiful than her true desolate state of existence. To live in memory, pray, dream, to imagine herself in the hereafter and in the midst of her departed loved ones, and in addition to eat and drink, both which she did often and with delight, was all that she now demanded from her earthly existence.

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When in reply to her question Orion informed her that he expected to go first to the Delta, she expressed regret, for he might in Upper Egypt have visited his sister-in-law, the mother of little Maria, in her cloister.

At these words she raised herself up, passed her hand over her brow and pointed to the little table standing near the head of the divan, upon which might be seen besides a goblet filled with the juice of fruits, bottles, boxes, and other things, also a parchment roll and a writing case. She reached for this, and handing it to Orion, said:

"A letter from your sister-in-law. It came yesterday afternoon, and I commenced to read it, but it began with a complaint about your father and the— You know— Before retiring. I could not, in spite of the best intentions, read more. Could not stand it! And to-day—first the Church, then the doctor and his request concerning the child. I have not yet found strength to read further! What else can a letter bring me but evil? Have you perhaps an idea whence I can still obtain happiness? But now— Read the letter aloud to me, please; not the part about your father, however. I shall keep that for myself hereafter, for myself alone."

Orion then unfolded the little roll, and with trembling lips hastily glanced over the nun's complaint about his father.

Every sentence of this letter of the widowed martyr breathed wild fanaticism. She found in the cloister what she had been in search of; she declared that she now lived only in God and in the Divine Redeemer. Even her child was to her now only one of God's young cratures, for whom it gave her rapturous joy to pray as for one unknown to her. And still it was her duty to provide for the salvation of the child's soul; and if it would not be too great a trial for the grandmother to be separated from the child that she would like to see it again. She had recently become abbess of the convent, and no one could prevent her from receiving her child; but she was afraid that her too great natural love for the child might bind her again to the world of flesh, with which she had broken forever, and so she proposed to have Maria educated in a neighboring convent not for earthly misery but for heavenly bliss, not for the companion of some sinful spouse, but as the pure bride of Christ.

A chill ran over Orion while he read this letter aloud; and when he laid it down his mother exclaimed:

"Perhaps she is right; perhaps Providence now commands us not to send the child to the doctor's friend but into a con-

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vent and to start her on the only road that leads to heaven without dangers and difficulties."

Orion thought to himself that it was his duty to protect this bright and joyous little child from such a fate, and he begged his mother to reflect that the question now was how best to restore the poor child to health. He now saw that she was in the right. His father had always respected the advice of the doctor, and for this reason, if for no other, it was her duty to follow his counsel.

Lady Nephoris, who had for some time been anxiously staring at a little box at her side, made no objection, and in the evening Orion carried little Maria and her governess safely to Rufinus, who gave them both a cordial welcome, in spite of the apprehensions he had felt yesterday.

When Maria lay close to Paula's couch, in her own little bed, and the young woman bent tenderly over her, she threw her arms around her neck, leaned her head upon her breast, and felt that there she was warmly, tenderly, and securely provided for.

As though she had been rescued from prison and chains, she shed copious tears and poured out into the soul of her friend all the sorrows and woes of her little wounded heart.

All this time Paula heard Orion's voice in the garden, and she was drawn powerfully to her lover, whom she had only hastily greeted as he entered; but she could not persuade herself to tear the child from her bosom, to disturb her now amid her joy and to leave her at such a moment! But no, no; she must see him! All that was in her urged her to him, and when Pul entered the room she laid Maria's hand in hers, and said:

"So now, make friends and stay here sweetly together, until I return and tell you a pretty story. You love Orion so tenderly, my dear little girl, and my story shall be about him and me."

"He was obliged to you," said Pul. "He has sent his farewell upon this tablet. He was nearly beside himself with impatience, and when he could wait no longer he wrote this down for you."

Paula seized the tablet with an exclamation of disappointment and read it in her room. He had anxiously longed for her appearance, but at last could wait no longer. How differently he had hoped, he wrote to his beloved, to close the day that he had dedicated to the rescue of her friends! Oh, why had she allowed herself to be kept back, why had she not hastened to him just for a few moments, even to thank him for his

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goodness and faithfulness, and to hear him confess that aloud and openly which yesterday he had only hinted to her. Sad and discontented with herself, she at length returned to the child.

Orion had in fact been unable to longer postpone his departure; for it seemed to him proper to inform the representative of the caliph of his proposed journey and of his quarrel with the prelate. Of all motives which impelled him to lend aid to the nuns, revenge was the one which the Arab could best understand.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ORION'S VISIT TO AMR. — PAULA AND THE ABBESS HAVE A CONVERSATION.

WHILE Orion rode across the river to Fostat, that ecstasy of joy, which a short time before had filled his soul, now forsook him. Could not and ought not Paula to have bestowed upon him at least a fraction of that hour that she had devoted to the child? He had been put off with a cordial shake of the hand upon his arrival and a look of gratitude. Would she not have flown to him with rapture if the love, of which she had assured him yesterday, burned as fiercely and as deeply within her heart as within his? Was the proud heart of this young woman, whom his mother had called distant and unapproachable, incapable of warm and self-forgetful devotion? Was there no means of kindling within her bosom that holy fire that was aglow within his? Innumerable doubts and a bitter consciousness of deception began to torment him, and a great weight of apprehension began now to take possession of him, which perhaps he would never have felt if he had seen her again and had heard from her own lips her joyous: "I love you!" and had had his own lips consecrated by the first kiss of his beloved. Out of humor and listlessly he entered the palace of the general. Disappointed and rejected suppliants met him in the ante-chamber, and with a bitter smile he thought that he, too, in similar manner, had just been sent off without having attained his object—and alas! by whom?

He caused himself to be announced, and his spirits rose a little bit when he was at once admitted to an audience and introduced, ahead of numerous persons who had long been waiting, into the reception-room of the general.

Amr greeted him with paternal tenderness, and when he heard that Orion had had a serious conflict with the patriarch, he sprung up, and with outstretched hands exclaimed:

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"Grasp my right hand here, my friend; come over to Islam, and with my left hand I will make you in the name of my master, the caliph, in spite of your youth, the successor of your father. Away with your doubts and fears! Join hands; now, quick! It is painful for me to leave Egypt without a vice-gerent in Memphis."

Orion's blood flowed hot and rapidly. His father's successor! He, the new Mukaukas! How it tickled his ambition, what paths of activity it would open up to him! His eyes began to glimmer, and his impulse was to cast himself upon his protector, whose right hand was still extended toward him; but suddenly his overexcited imagination brought before him the picture of his Saviour, with whom he had made a silent compact in the church, and in this picture He sadly turned His gentle countenance away from him. Then he remembered his vow, he forgot all that Paula had done to him, and he seized the general's right hand, but only for the purpose of carrying it to his lips and of thanking him from the bottom of his heart; he then besought him with warm and affectionate earnestness not to become angry with him if he remained firm and adhered to the faith of his ancestors and of his father. And the general did not censure him, but hastily and far from the hearty cordiality with which he had received him, Amr warned him to be on his guard against the patriarch, against whom he would be unable to protect him so long as he insisted upon remaining a Christian. When Orion then informed him that he was on the point of going off on a short journey, and had come to pay his respects before leaving, the commander involuntarily sprung up and said that he, too, was compelled to take a trip to Medina, and would start the day after to-morrow.

"As I considered you so young for the high position of your father," exclaimed Amr, "I have endeavored to find a task for you by the solution of which you might prove that I have not expected too much from you. You now remain firm in your purpose: it is impossible for me, however, to intrust to a Christian of your age the important governorship of Memphis; we might have made the venture with a young follower of Islam. However, I shall not withdraw from you now a task which it was thought you might otherwise undertake. If you succeed in the solution of this problem, you will reap great advantages, and I expect, then, to be able to use you for the benefit of the whole province; for what is it that now leads me forth from here, where so many hundreds of new and uncompleted improvements require my presence, but a sincere interest in the welfare of this land, in which I am but a stranger still,

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while you must love it as the home of yourself and of your family? I am going to Medina, because the caliph in that letter there reproaches me, because, he declares, I send to the treasury too small sums for so rich a land as Egypt. And still not a penny of your taxes strays into my pockets! With them I maintain one hundred and fifty thousand laborers for the purpose of repairing and restoring the canals and waterworks, which my predecessors, those Byzantine blood-suckers, so disgracefully allowed to fall into ruin and decay; with them I build, improve and sow seed for the future! All this costs money! It absorbs the greater part of the whole revenue. Not only for the purpose of defending myself against such reproaches, but in addition to prevail upon Omar to permit me in the future, as heretofore, not to set on foot any system of robbery, but to keep before my eye the true welfare of the province, for this purpose I am about to undertake this journey. For a thousand reasons I do it very unwillingly, and you, young man, you should, if your fatherland is dear to you— Do you love it and do you hold its best interests dear?"

"From the depths of my heart!" exclaimed the young man.

"Very well then, you should remain now at home, if it be possible, and devote yourself with all your strength to the task that I have set before you. I hate procrastination. My rule of action, at all times, and not in the field only, is not to weary my horse by riding hither and thither, but to make straight for the foe. Lay this rule up in your heart! You will have no time to lose, because I am not demanding anything easy from you. Assisted by your knowledge of this land, and of its people, as well as by the help of the records and lists among the archives of the old palace, concerning which your father spoke to me, you are to attempt to work out a new subdivision of the land into districts with respect to the taxable value of the individual districts. We feel daily the insufficiency of the old method of collecting taxes; you will find ample room for improvement of every description. Overthrow all that you find established if you consider it advisable. Others have made efforts to suggest a new method of subdivision into districts, and a new mode of tax collection. The best plan shall have the preference, and you seem to me to be the man to win the prize, and thereby to secure a great field for future activity. Is it not mere ennui and hunger for the pleasures of the Imperial City that are alluring you away from your unfortunate Memphis—"

"No, sir," declared Orion. "That which I am now about to do brings me no advantage whatever, and had I not given

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my word and bound myself I would to-morrow plunge into this glorious work, both body and soul. That you expect from me the solution of such momentous questions, is the noblest gift that has ever fallen to my lot. In order to prove myself worthy of your confidence, I shall return with all possible speed and shall devote to this work all that I possess of mind, insight, endurance and love for my country. I was a diligent student, and I would be worthy of shame if what I was as a youth should hinder me as a man from outstripping the boy."

"Nobly and grandly said," replied the general, extending his hand. "Do your best, and you shall have ample opportunity for employing your powers. Remember my warning against the patriarch and the black Wekil. Unfortunately I have no one here who can fill his place, with the exception of the brave Kahdi Othman, but he is no warrior, and is indispensable in his place. Fight shy of Obada, return promptly, and the merciful God be with you."

When Orion had left the bridge of boats behind him on his return home, he saw a decorated Nile boat, such as now rarely landed here, lying at anchor in the harbor, and on the river-road he met two sedan-chairs, followed by attendants and beasts of burden. All this had a brilliant and aristocratic appearance, and at any other time would have aroused his curiosity; to-day, however, he only wondered a moment who the new arrivals could be, and then returned to his reflections concerning the task that Amr had submitted to him. He regretted from the depths of his heart the hour when he had given his word and bound himself to lend assistance to strangers; for he, who after so long a period of inactivity longed to put his strength to the test, who saw himself suddenly and as if by a miracle called to tread a pathway that he had prescribed for himself, now felt himself hindered and kept back from an undertaking which he hoped to be able to bring to a successful issue, and by means of which he hoped to bestow a benefit upon his country, and which attracted him as with a hundred magnets.

After his will had on the following morning been legally executed, he called the secretary of the treasury to him for a private audience. He had said to himself that at least one person in his house must have cognizance of what he was undertaking, and that this person could be no other than Nilus.

Accordingly he was requested by the treasurer to follow him into the *impluvium* of his private dwelling, and this invitation was overheard by several of the clerks who were present; but they did not allow themselves to be disturbed in their work;

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only the youngest of all, a handsome, sixteen-year-old boy, with tanned Egyptian face and cunning bright black eyes, who had followed attentively every word of the treasurer and of his master, arose as soon as the two had left the room, and, noiselessly and unobserved, crept out into the vestibule. Thence he hastened to the ladder-like staircase which led to the dove-cote, the care of which was under his control, swung himself out of the lofty dwelling-place of the winged messengers upon the roof of the lower story, and crawled on all fours to the large, open, rectangular space, through which the *impluvium* was supplied with light and air. He drew back the awning that at midday kept off the scorching sun with a quick movement of his hand, and listened with the utmost attention to the conversation that was going on below. This youngster was Anubis, the foster-brother of the little humming-bird, and he seemed not to be inferior to his beloved mistress in the art of eavesdropping, for no one could have pricked up his ears more attentively. He knew also for what purpose he was exposing himself on the roof to the unmerciful darts of an African summer sun, for Catharine, his adored companion, the mistress of his passionate young heart, had promised him a sweet kiss if he would find out for her the nature and object of Orion's dangerous journey. Anubis had himself informed her yesterday of all that he had overheard in the vestibule of the treasury, but these indefinite hints had not satisfied the little humming-bird. She must clearly see, must accurately know what was going on there, and she was not mistaken when she presumed that just exactly the reward that she had promised the boy would spur him on to attempt even the impossible.

The youth had not hoped to accomplish his purpose so quickly, although he had been most hopeful; for scarcely had he drawn back the awning when Orion began to disclose to the treasurer all that he proposed to do.

After Orion had completed his report the boy did not wait to hear Nilus's reply, but crept, intoxicated as it were by his success and by the prospect of his reward, which for him comprised all the happiness of heaven, back to the dove-cote. But he could not return the same way he had come; for had he reentered the vestibule and met some one of the higher officers, he would have been remanded to the copying-room. Accordingly he slipped to the parapet of the roof that faced the fisherman's port, swung himself over it, and seized a gutter in order to slide down to the court below; but alas, it was very old—it rains so rarely in Memphis—and scarcely had he swung his body free, when the rotten tin broke loose with a crash. The

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misguided boy fell amid the broken pieces of the gutter down to the ground, a distance of four times the height of a man; there resounded from the pavement a loud dull thud, mixed with a sickening cry, and a few moments later it was known throughout the whole treasury that poor Anubis, the active attendant of the pigeons, had fallen from the roof while attending to his protégés, and had broken his leg.

The two men in the *impluvium* would be informed later of this accident, for the order had been given that they should not be disturbed during their interview.

Nilus had listened to the disclosures of his young master with increasing astonishment, discontent and apprehension, and when Orion had finished, he besought him with all the fluency of a true and noble heart, full of apprehension for the salvation of the soul and body of a beloved man, to desist from so daring an undertaking, from which he could reap nothing but condemnation, injury and persecution. Nilus was a whole-souled Jacobite, and the thought that his young master was on the point of risking everything in defense of Melchite nuns, and of calling down upon himself the anger and even the curse of the patriarch, seemed to him insufferable.

The warnings and beseeching prayers of the faithful officer did not leave Orion unmoved; but he adhered to his determination and represented to Nilus that he had given Rufinus his word, and therefore could not now withdraw, although he himself had already lost all pleasure in the proposed undertaking. He was averse to permitting, ay, it would be impossible for him to permit, the old man to expose himself to such danger all alone. Sincere and heartfelt apprehension is full of resources, and Orion had scarcely completed his sentence when Nilus met him with a proposition that was well calculated to disperse the young man's last cause for hesitancy. Melampus, the Greek superintendent of the wharves, was a zealous Melchite, in spite of the fact that he no longer dared to openly confess his faith. He and his two sons, both fresh, strong sailors, had already on frequent occasions given proof of their adventurous spirit and fearless courage, and Nilus had no doubt that they would more than willingly identify themselves with an undertaking that had for its object the rescue of so many of their pious fellow-Melchites. They could take Orion's place and lend Rufinus much more efficient support than he.

The young man approved of this proposition, so far as to determine to take the two brave mechanics with whom he was well acquainted with him, because they might give him, in

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case of necessity, effectual aid; but not on this account to withdraw his own personal support.

At length he was forced to impose silence on Nilus, who stubbornly insisted upon his objections. He betook himself then, in company with the sadly troubled man, to the wharf, and the old master-mechanic, a good-natured giant, showed himself joyfully ready to assist in rescuing the nuns, as though "each one was his own mother." It would be a frolic to the two young men to take part in such a scheme; and he was not mistaken, for after the secret had been imparted to them, one waved his ax enthusiastically in the air, and the other struck his left palm so ferociously with his mighty fist that one would have thought that he was going to a dance.

Without further delay Orion and the three men entered a boat and rowed across to the house of Rufinus, to make him acquainted with the young men, and he was greatly pleased with them.

Orion remained with Rufinus. He had promised him yesterday to take breakfast with him, and breakfast was now ready. Paula had already been an hour in the convent, and Johanna assured them that she would certainly return in a few moments. Accordingly they sat down without her, and breakfast was served. The meal was almost over, and still Paula did not return. Orion, who at first had succeeded in concealing his discontent, was now so completely overcome by it that his host had great difficulty in obtaining short and absent-minded answers to his frequent interrogations.

Rufinus himself at length became uneasy, but as he was on the point of rising to see what had become of Paula he saw Pulcheria, who had been standing at the window and had seen Paula coming, hasten toward them with the joyful exclamation:

"Here she is!"

But again minute after minute passed, and the quarter of an hour grew into the half, and still Orion waited in vain for Paula. Joyful expectation had long ago changed into impatience, impatience into a feeling of offended dignity, and this again into sullen anger and bitter resentment, when at last, instead of her, Pulcheria entered the room and requested him, in Paula's name, to come into the garden.

She had been detained unexpectedly long in the convent. Like the smoke which the bee-tamer introduces into the bee-hive, the terrible news of what threatened them had frightened the gentle, pious sisters out of their accustomed peacefulness, and thrown them into great consternation. To-day they had

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to pack up what was most valuable, and although Orion had explained that only a limited number of chests and bags could be stored upon the boat, one had arranged to take her oratory, another a large picture of some saint, a third a copper fish-kettle, and a fourth, fifth, and sixth even the large shrine with the bones of the martyr Ammonius in it, to which the hierarchical Church was indebted for its reputation of special holiness. In order to put a stop to this indiscretion the abbess had to exert all her dignity and authority, and many a sister who had been refused a place for her dear but too capacious possessions had withdrawn without her treasures, weeping bitter tears. The superior of the nuns had not been able to devote herself entirely to Paula until she had surveyed everything that was to be taken along. She then led the young woman into her private room, which had been furnished with pure and costly simplicity, and there induced her to pour out her heart into her sympathetic ears.

Any one who had seen these two together might have thought that the troubled daughter had taken refuge in her mother's bosom to seek for advice; for the gray-haired abbess might well in her youth have resembled the daughter of General Thomas, only the aristocratic and yet attractive bearing of the young woman had, as far as the matron was concerned, changed into a majestic and condescending dignity, and no one could have told from her now spitefully closed mouth that it had once been the attractive charm of her face.

While the abbess followed the confessions of the girl, the expression of her eyes, which glowed fanatically only when zeal for her faith took possession of her soul, changed frequently, and what she heard was of a most manifold nature; for Paula looked upon this conversation as a kind of confession, and kept back nothing from the maternal and still priestly friend, and told her all that had taken place in her life, mind, and heart since she had entered the house of the Mukaukas. Not one corner of her heart did she leave unveiled; she spared and concealed nothing; and when she tried to depict the mighty efforts of her beloved to grasp the whole seriousness of life, her love and enthusiasm urged and encouraged her to let his picture, blurred by one short but deep shadow, shine forth in so much the more brilliant light. When Paula had at length completed her confession, the abbess remained silent a long time; she had, however, drawn the young girl to her and asked, in affectionate tones:

"And now within your bosom storms are violently urging you to let the passion that has taken possession of your heart

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in so strange a manner have free course to fly into the wide-open arms of your beloved, to resign yourself to him and say: 'There, take me; I am thine! Summon the priest to bless us!' Isn't it so? Am I not right?"

Paula blushed deeply and nodded assent. The abbess drew her head to her bosom and thoughtfully replied:

"I saw him pass with his four-in-hand, and I looked and thought of many famous statues of the heathen Greeks. Handsome appearance, birth, wealth, ay, intellectual gifts likewise, in fact, everything that could win for him the heart of a Paula, are his; and she—I see it plainly—would willingly intrust her heart to him."

And again the young girl assented, and the venerably lady proceeded with a gentle sigh and as though she found great difficulty in doing something that was unavoidable:

"And so every warning would be in vain. He is, to be sure, not of our confession, he—"

"But how he respects it," Paula exclaimed, "he has shown by jeopardizing for you and yours his life and liberty."

"Say for his beloved," rejoined the abbess. "But let us leave that out of the discussion, however much it pains me to think of the daughter of Thomas as the wife of a Jacobite. You will not forsake him; and the father of love often leads true love in the most wonderful ways to that which is best, even though it goes astray and passes through ravines and across abysses."

At these words Paula threw her arms around the abbess's neck in order to kiss her gratefully; but she gave the happy girl only a few moments, and then drew her to her side. Holding Paula's right hand in both of hers she passed into a tone of calm exposition. She and her nuns, she began, were deeply indebted to Orion. Her sincerest wish was that Paula as his wife might attain the highest happiness that earth can afford; yet, as it was her duty to impart advice, she could not be blind to the dangers that threatened to prejudice this very happiness. Behind her—the abbess—lay a long and manifold series of experiences, and these had shown her hundreds of young men who had been given up by father, mother, the Church, and all good people as lost sinners; and of these many a one had seen his day of Damascus. A turning point had come, and out of the lost sons came forth noble and pious men.

At these words Paula had drawn nearer to her with eyes beaming with joy. She however shook her head disapprovingly, and her eyes assumed a more and more devout and fanatical expression as she proceeded:

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"However, my child, in the case of all of these grace has shown its powerful effects, and that miracle we call being born again had been wrought. They remained the same in the body and in their manner of thought, but their relation to the world and to life had become completely changed. What had once appeared to them attractive they could now hate; what had once been to them important had now become naught; and what had been unimportant now became most important; where formerly they had determined everything according to their own wishes, they now referred all to the will of God. The old impulses had remained the same; still they were kept within bounds by the never-slumbering consciousness that they would lead not to joy but to eternal damnation. These persons who had been born again learned to hate the world, and their eyes were directed toward heaven and upward instead of downward into the dust. If one of them stumbled, his whole new life forced him to recover his equilibrium before he sunk completely to the ground. But Orion, the man you love? I see him attempting to leave behind his guilt and striving by means of a more honorable worldly manner of life to regain his union with God. Not only have his opinions remained the same, but his relation to the world and to the attractions it offers is unchanged. Carnal love urges him on to strive after that which is high and great, and he is attempting with all earnestness to attain to it; but he may and will stumble over every stone that the devil places in his pathway, and it will be very difficult for him to recover from the fall, for his misfortunes have not led him to a new birth and to a new life in God. Countless times have I seen just such men as he sunk back into sin from which they had escaped, and before we place full confidence in a man who has once, even once, wandered so far from the way of God, and upon whom the grace of God has not yet shown its powerful effects, we would do well to subject his course of life and his character to a longer inspection than that of a few short days. Though you feel bound to hold fast to your heart's affection, do not hasten to throw yourself into your lover's open arms, do not bestow upon him the pure treasures of your body and soul, do not become his until he has fully proven himself worthy of you!"

"But I believe in him!" exclaimed Paula, while tears streamed from her eyes.

"You believe because you love!" replied the abbess.

"And because he deserves it."

"For how long?"

"Was he not a noble man before he went astray?"

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"Many a murderer has also been a noble man. One short moment drives most criminals out of society."

"Society still proudly upholds him."

"As the son of the Mukaukas."

"And because his conduct wins the heart of every one."

"And that of the Most High also, do you think?"

"Oh, mother, mother! why do you measure him with the measure of your own heaven-devoted soul? How few are the elect who become sharers of the grace of which you speak!"

"He who has sinned as he has must strive after it."

"He is doing so, mother, in his own way."

"A way that is wrong, wrong for one that has been guilty of such a crime. All for which he is striving are worldly treasures."

"No, no! He stands firm in his belief in God and the Saviour. He is no unbeliever."

"And yet thinks that he can escape atoning for his sins?"

"Does not the Lord forgive every sin where there is true repentance? And he has repented, ah, so fearfully! and how terribly he has suffered!"

"Say, rather, that he has felt the lashes which his sin has inflicted upon him. Others are coming, and how will he bear them? Temptation lurks in every path, and how can he escape it? I am bound to call to you like a warning mother. Keep your and his passion within bounds yet a little while, continue to prove him and grant him nothing, not even the smallest privilege, until he—"

"And how long, how long shall I stand upon this ignoble watch?" sobbed Paula. "Is that to be called love that does not trust, that is not ready to share even the life of an unstable one?"

"Yes, child, yes," interrupted the venerable lady. "To suffer all, to endure all is the duty of true love and of yours also; but you should not suffer the strongest of all bonds to bind you and him until the unstable wanderer has become sure-footed. Follow his every step, stand bravely at his side with affectionate care, do not despair of him if he shows himself different from that which you had hoped, try, pious heart, try to make him worthy of forgiveness from above; but do not be too hasty, do not give him your consent yet."

Paula did not willingly submit to this last admonition either; but the sin that Orion had committed filled the abbess with the greatest mistrust. According to her idea a man who had sinned so disgracefully and upon whom the curse of his dying father had fallen, ought to have turned away from the world

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and striven, with prayers, for pardon and a new birth instead of seeking rapturous joy at the side of one so favored and so tenderly loved by her as Paula, whom she would bestow only upon the most blameless of her own fellow-believers. Oh, how she would have rejoiced, she who, after a stormy life amid the gayeties of the world, had first found peace of mind and true happiness within the walls of the cloister, to see the noble daughter of her old friend at her side as the true bride of Christ, and perhaps her successor in the office of abbess! She was anxious that her darling should be spared the great sorrows which the profligacy of faithless men had caused her, and so she had not deviated one inch's breadth from the tenor of her counsel, had not become weary in representing to the young girl zealously and affectionately the necessity of her submission. At length Paula took leave of the abbess, after having promised her not to engage herself finally to Orion before his return from Dumiat, and until she had received a letter from her, setting forth what opinion she had formed of him during their prospective flight.

The stout-hearted girl had not shed such copious tears as she did during the course of this interview since the fatal fair at Abyla, where she had lost father and brother, and with tear-stained face and aching head she returned through the scorching sun of the midday to the house of Rufinus and to her faithful old Betta. She had besought Paula to lie down; and when she had failed in this she persuaded her at least to bathe her head in water as fresh as it was possible to procure during such heat, and to permit her to rearrange her hair with her clever hands; for this had been her mother's favorite prescription against headache.

When Paula at length stood face to face with her lover in a shady place in the garden, they regarded each other with a look of embarrassment and uneasiness. He looked at her ill-naturedly; and her eyes, inflamed by weeping, and her contracted brow, beneath which pain was hammering and boring, did not contribute to restore him to a good humor. It was for her to excuse herself, and during the silence that immediately followed his salutation she said, in a tone of gentle and earnest request:

"Pardon me for coming so late. You have had to wait so very long! But saying adieu to my best friend and second mother caused such deep emotions to arise and was so ineffably sad! When I returned I was almost beside myself with a headache; and now— How differently I had hoped to meet you early this morning!"

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"Yesterday you had no time to spare for me," he replied, gloomily, "and again to-day—you were present when Rufinus extended me his invitation—to-day! I am not unreasonable in my demands—and with you, God knows, I could not dare to be! But did you not have to take leave of me also to-day, perhaps forever? Why was it necessary to bestow so much time and strength upon the abbess and leave so small a remnant for me? That is scarcely a just division."

"How could I deny it?" said she, sadly. "Yes, you are certainly right; but yesterday evening I could not leave the child while it was weeping its sorrow away upon my bosom; and if you only knew how terrified I was, and how my heart ached when instead of you your letter—"

"I was compelled to go across to see the commander," interrupted Orion. "This adventure forces me to leave much behind me; and I am no longer the unrestrained and untrammeled person I used to be. During this terrible breakfast I felt as though I were sitting upon pins. But let us leave that at rest! I came hither with heart full of joy and hope; and now? But, Paula, this venture is rending asunder for me more, is placing me in a more dangerous position, is heaping much greater burdens upon my shoulders than you perhaps think or know. I will explain it to you after awhile; and in order to undergo it all, to secure the fresh courage and enthusiasm I need, I must be certain of this one thing, for which I would risk much more and expose myself to much greater dangers and labors, as though it were a joyous sport; I must know—"

"You must know" she interrupted him, "whether my heart is fully and completely yours—"

"Whether I," he exclaimed, with increasing passion, "in spite of all the terrific sorrow that oppresses this poor soul of mine, am to be happier than the redeemed in heaven. Oh, Paula, my only, adored girl, may I—"

"You may," she rejoined, firmly and earnestly. "I love you, Orion. I shall never, never cease to love you with all my heart."

At these words he rushed nearer to her, seized both her hands in his as though he were beside himself, and regardless of the proximity of the house, from which twenty eyes might have seen him, drew her to his lips and covered her with passionate kisses until she released herself from him and beseechingly cried out to him:

"Not thus; no, I beg you, not yet and not in this way!"

"Now, right now, or when else?" he asked, impetuously.

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"But here—this garden—you are right, this is no place for two happy human beings who have just found each other. Come, lead the way into the house, seek a place for us there where, unseen, unheard, alone with ourselves and our happiness—"

"No, no, no!" she said, hastily, and passed her hand over her aching brow. "Come to the bench under the sycamore; it is quite shady there, and there you can tell me all; and there you shall hear again how powerfully love has taken possession of me."

He looked at her disappointed and estranged; she, however, turned toward the sycamore and took a seat beneath it, and Orion followed slowly. She motioned to him to take a seat at her side, but he remained standing in front of her and said, sadly and gloomily:

"Always the same, always the same calmness and coldness. Is that right, Paula? Is that the impetuous love of which you speak? Is that the answer to the prayer of a passionately loving heart? Is this all that love bestows upon love, that the lover receives from his betrothed whom he is about to leave, perhaps forever?"

She looked at him with an expression of deep anxiety, and said, in a tone of touching earnestness:

"Oh, Orion, Orion, have you not listened to me, have you not seen and felt how deeply I love you? You must feel it; and if you do, then be content. I swear to you, my only beloved one, be content now with the assurance that this heart belongs to you, that your, yes, your Paula—here she is, I, it is I—will think of nothing, care for nothing, pray and long for nothing but you, yes, for you, now my life and my all."

"Come, then, come with me," he cried, impetuously, "and grant your betrothed what is his due!"

"No, no, not betrothed, not yet!" she exclaimed, imploringly from the depths of her anxious soul. "In my veins too warm, passionate blood courses. I too have the impulse to rush into your arms and rest my head upon yours, but your betrothed—now, to-day, I dare not, I can not be!"

"And why? Tell me, why not!" he cried, angrily, and pressed his clinched fist against his breast. "Why are you not willing to be my betrothed, if it be true that you love me? For what purpose have you invented this new means of torture?"

"Because wisdom has taught me," she rejoined, in a gentle tone, while her bosom heaved violently as if she was afraid to hear her own words, "because wisdom teaches me that the time has not yet come. Oh, Orion, you have not learned to

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bridle the passion and the desires that burn within you; you have forgotten only too quickly what lies behind you, behind us, what a mountain there was to cross before it was vouchsafed to us to find each other, before I—yes, my beloved, it must be said—before I was even able to look at you without bitterness and hatred. A wonderful and unsearchable providence has willed, and you too have honorably done your part, that all this should become changed, that what was white is now black, that the chilling blast of the north wind should be transformed into a warm southern zephyr. And so perhaps poison will change to a saving remedy, and curses into blessings. Out of passionate hatred there has sprung up within this foolish bosom a love just as powerful. But your betrothed, your wife I can not yet become. Call it timidity, call it selfish apprehension, call it what you will. I call it wisdom and praise it, although it has caused these poor eyes a thousand bitter tears before mind and heart could determine to listen to the warning voice. And you, hold fast to this one thing: this heart will never belong to any one but you, whatever shall happen. My whole soul is yours! I shall not be your betrothed until I can say to you, with a trust as confident as my love is warm: 'You have come out conqueror; take me, I am yours!' Then you shall feel and acknowledge that Paula's love is not cooler, is not meeker— Oh, God, gracious God! Learn to understand me Orion! You must learn it for your sake, for my sake! My head, merciful Heaven, my head!"

With these words she let her head fall upon her breast, and pressed her hands to her burning forehead, but he, pale and shivering, laid his right hand upon her shoulder, and said, in a subdued tone of voice, and one void of all its usual liquidness and harmony: "The teachers of esotericism demand proofs and pledges from their disciples before admitting them into the mysteries of their order. We are here in Egypt, and still it looks very peculiar when such a doctrine is applied to love. All this has not originated with you. What you call wisdom is the voice of the sister superior from across the way!"

"The voice of prudence," rejoined Paula, gently. "The passion of the heart had drowned it with its loud demands, and I am gratified to my friend—"

"For what do you owe her gratitude?" cried the young man, with angry emotion. "You should rather curse her for this ignoble service, as I now do. Does she know me at all? Has she ever heard me speak one single word? If the old wiseacre, this ultra-prudent despot of a nun, knew how my heart is constituted she would have given you different advice. Through

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confidence and love it has always been possible from my earliest childhood to induce me to perform the most difficult things. Whatever faults I have, I have never disappointed friendly confidence and trust. And as far as you are concerned, you, with your wisdom and prudence, had I been loved and made happy, I could have torn for your sake the sun and the stars from the heavens, and have laughed at every temptation, thinking only of your approval, and full of joy and pride at having overcome the last of your doubts. But thus—in such a manner! Instead of raising me up, you degrade me, you deprive me of my own self-respect! United to you, I could have flown on before you into regions of brightness, where perfection sits enthroned, but thus—in such a manner! What an undertaking to attempt to start your cold love into violent flames by means of good deeds for tinder! What a piece of business for a man to subject himself to a test at the instance of his beloved! Repulsive and insulting torture, which I can not stand, against which my whole nature revolts, and which you must and will relieve me of if it is true that you love me!"

"I love you, love you!" she cried, beside herself, and grasped his hands. "It may be you are right. I— Oh, God, what must I do? But do not now ask me to say yes or no! I can not even comprehend the most ordinary idea! You see, you see how I am suffering!"

"I see it," he replied, and glanced sympathetically at her pale and trembling brow, "and since it must now be so, good-bye till this evening! Go now and try to rest and care for yourself—but then—"

"Then, on your journey, during your flight," exclaimed Paula, "repeat to the abbess what you have said to me. She is a noble woman, and will learn to love and understand you, I know. And she will certainly give you back that word—"

"What word?"

"That I gave her, not to become yours until—"

"Until I have undergone the esoteric test?" exclaimed Orion, angrily shrugging his shoulders. "Go now to your rest, go! What might have been the happiest hour of our life, a strange woman has made the most repulsive and unhappy. You are not certain of yourself, nor am I of myself. All that we shall now at this time say will be of no advantage to either of us. Go and take a rest, sleep away your pain, and I—I will try to forget—will— If you only knew what is going on within me now! Farewell until we meet again in a more friendly manner, and—I can scarcely trust myself to say it—in a manner to make us more happy!"

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With this he turned quickly away, but she called to him in an agonized tone:

"Orion, do not forget; Orion, you know that I love you!"

But he did not hear her, and with head sunk low upon his breast he hastened out upon the street without returning into Rufinus's house.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ORION ON HIS RETURN HOME MEETS SOME OLD FRIENDS.

Upon reaching home Orion threw himself upon a divan, overcome by a deep sense of injury. She had said that her heart belonged to him, but what poor, indifferent love must that be which grants nothing before it has examined the whole ground and feels itself safe! And how could Paula have permitted a third person to place herself between them and direct her action and feeling? She must have confided to this third person all that had taken place between them, for this Melchite nun, who despised him, he must be willing— It was simply maddening— But he could not retract, he had promised the old man, had bound himself to undertake this foolish adventure. Instead of the noble, proud mistress of his whole life, his imagination now pictured to him a weak, unstable and lukewarm woman. There lay the maps and plans which he had caused to be sent to his room by Nilus for the purpose of using them in connection with the task that the noble Amr had given him, and when his eyes fell upon them he smote the wall with his fist, sprung up, and rushed like a madman up and down the room that her quiet life had made sacred. There lay her lute; he had put new strings on it, and had just tuned it. In order to calm his feelings he drew it to him, seized the *plectrum*, and began to play. But the instrument was an inferior one, and she had contented herself with it! He cast it aside and took his own up, a present from Heliodora. How beautifully and with how much feeling she used to play it! Again its strings gave forth a glorious melody, and by degrees he began to recover his good spirits, and the music quieted his feelings, as it had so often done before. The instrument sent forth beneath his touch beautiful and touching tones, but often he struck the strings so impetuously that its powerful ringing and clashing sounded like the agonized cry of a soul in torment.

On account of this passionate manner of playing, the bridge suddenly fell with a threatening noise upon the bottom-piece of the lute, and at the same moment the secretary, who had

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accompanied him to the Imperial City, opened the door in joyful excitement, and as he crossed the threshold, called out to him: "Master, just think, master! A messenger has just come from the inn of Sostratus and brings you this tablet. It is open and I have read it. Just think; it is scarcely credible! Senator Justinus and his noble lady, the mighty Martina, are here, here in Memphis, and they request you to come to see them to discuss an important matter of business. They arrived last night, the messenger said, and now, now—such joy! How much pleasure fell to your lot in their palace! Can we suffer them to remain at the inn? As long as hospitality continues to exist it would be a sin!"

"Impossible, absolutely impossible!" exclaimed Orion, who had cast aside the lute, and was now himself gazing upon the tablet. "It is he in fact; his own handwriting! These two immovable persons are in Memphis, are in Egypt! Incredible, by Zeus"—the golden youth of Christian faith still employed this form of oath in Alexandria and Constantinople—"by Zeus, it is incumbent upon me to receive them here like princes! Wait a moment! You told the messenger, of course, that I would come at once? Have my four Pannonian steeds harnessed to the silver carriage. I am going to see my mother; but I have abundance of time. Order Sebek to have the guests' apartments, from which, thank heaven, those sick people have been removed, arranged and prepared for distinguished occupants. My present chamber must be taken for that purpose too, and I shall return to my former apartments. They have of course numerous attendants. Set twenty, thirty slaves to work forthwith! Everything must be ready in two hours at most. Let the two halls be prepared with special care. Where anything is wanting, everything in the palace is at the unconditional command of Sebek. Justinus here in Egypt! But make haste! Wait a moment! one thing more! Take these papers and plans here, or no—they are too heavy for you. Give them to a slave and have them carried to Rufinus, and request him to take care of them until I come. Tell him I propose to make use of them along the road; he will understand."

The secretary rushed out, and Orion quickly caused his hair to be arranged and his mourning garb to be put in order again; then he betook himself to his mother. She had often heard of the magnificent reception that had been given her son, and in earlier days, her husband, in the house of the senator, and thought it eminently proper on this account that the guests' apartments, to which Paula's room had also belonged, should

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be put in order for the distinguished travelers, but she requested that they should be told that she was ill, in order that she might not be required to inconvenience herself on their account. She then advised Orion to postpone his trip and to devote himself to his friends. He explained, however, that it would be impossible for him to allow himself to be detained by them. Full confidence could be placed in Sebek and the chief stewardess. The emperor himself would excuse a sick lady from the duties of a hostess. She would perhaps permit the noble couple once at least to pay their respects to her, but Nephoris refused to acquiesce in this also. It would be quite enough if the guests received every day in her name choice fruits and flowers, and at the end of their visit costly gifts. Orion approved of this handsome purpose of his mother, and a few moments later he was driving his Pannonian steeds rapidly out of the court.

At the harbor he met the ship captain whom he had employed, and made a hasty sign to him with two fingers, and he signified by an energetic nod of his head that he had understood the meaning of the signal to be: "Two hours before midnight you will be expected."

The look of this weather-beaten sailor, and the prospect of repaying some of the kindness of his friends, encouraged him, and however much sorrow it caused him to be compelled to forsake just these friends, the dangers that awaited him began again to arouse him. It would not be difficult for him to win the good will of the abbess on the journey, and he might succeed in bringing Paula to her reason that evening!

Justinus and his wife were Melchites also, and he knew that they would be enthusiastic about his design if he took them into his confidence.

The inn of Sostratus, a massive quadrangular building, which inclosed within its four sides a capacious court, was the largest and handsomest ordinary in the city. The east side faced the street and the Nile, and contained the most magnificent rooms in the house, which the senatorial couple and their suite had occupied since the past night.

The noise of Orion's four-in-hand attracted Justinus to the window, and as soon as he recognized Orion he seized a napkin and waved to him out of the window, and called out to him a joyful welcome, and then suddenly disappeared.

"There he is!" he exclaimed to his wife, who was lying upon a lounge, clad in the scantiest fashion possible, while a boy fanned her and she from time to time touched her parched lips to a glass of fruit-juice.

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"Ah, see; that is splendid!" rejoined the matron, and commanded her maid to bring her as quick as possible something to throw around her, something very light. She then turned to a most charming young creature, who at the first alarm had sprung up from her divan and asked:

"Do you wish him to find you here at once, or would you rather have us to talk with him first, and tell him that we have smuggled you along with us?"

"I would prefer the latter," she replied, in a musical voice, and heaved a gentle sigh before she continued in a tone of embarrassment: "What will he think of me? Men grow old, but folly, folly—"

"Does folly grow or does it decrease with years?" asked the matron, laughing. "But there he is."

The young woman hastened to a side-door and disappeared through it. Mme. Martina followed her with her eyes and, as she pointed out to her husband whither she had gone, she exclaimed:

"She has left a little crack open. Great heavens, to be in love such weather as this; a horrible idea!"

And now the door opened, and there followed a most hearty greeting. One could see from the manner of the old pair and of the youth that this meeting afforded them the deepest joy.

As Justinus drew Orion to his heart, Martina exclaimed: "Give me a kiss too!" and after the young man had promptly and good-naturedly complied with her request, she commenced to complain with a deep groan:

"Oh, child, child of man, great Sesostris! How could your famous ancestor succeed in performing deeds of valor beneath this sun? As far as I am concerned, I am passing away. I am melting like butter; but what will one not do for those whom he loves? But Syra, Syra! For Heaven's sake bring me something that looks more like a piece of clothing. How sensible are the fashions of the African peasants that we have often observed along the route! If they have on a piece of cloth three fingers broad they consider that they are handsomely clothed. But take a seat—take a seat; here at my feet! Bring the gentleman a chair, Argos; then a little wine, and some water in one of those moist clay jars, and cool like it was just now. Husband, I think this young man has grown a little handsomer. But, merciful heaven, this mourning costume! How becoming it is to him. Poor, unhappy boy, we heard the sad news upon our arrival at Alexandria!" She then wiped her eyes and at the same time her forehead, that

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was sparkling with perspiration, and her husband joined her in her expressions of sympathy at the death of the Mukaukas.

Justinus and Martina were a charming and happy couple. Two people who were perfectly at home in their exalted position, and who, high-born as they both were, never felt the need of exhibiting to the public their dignity, because in them it was evident to both great and small at the first glance.

They had presumed to remain natural and without constraint in a circle of society that more than any other was a slave to every kind of stiff formality. And whoever did not like the utter absence of conventionality so prominent in them and in their house was at liberty to stay away. He, without ambition, a senator by virtue of his name and wealth, who never thought of making any other use of this nominal dignity than to secure for prominent patrons of his house good positions in public life, or for members of his own family good seats upon occasions of public festivity, but a hospitable gentleman, the friend of his friends, who both like to live and let live. Martina, an amiable lady, who never laid great claims to beauty, but who had been much courted in society. For many years this couple had found no place more attractive than the capital city or their magnificent villa on the Bosphorus, and they disliked excessively to visit famous baths or to travel about like other great and rich people. It gave them special pleasure to make it agreeable for their intimate friends in their house, and there were always numerous such friends, because it was precisely those who had grown weary of the pleasures of the Byzantine court who enjoyed themselves most in their unconventional home. The young people were fond of selecting Martina as their confidante, and likewise Heliodora, the widow of their beloved nephew, had come to her with her sorrows. Orion had become acquainted with her in the senator's house. Heliodora was the favorite of the old couple, but the younger brother of her deceased husband had occupied a still higher position in their affections. They had determined to make him their heir, but they had for two years been in mourning for him, the news having reached them that Narses, who had attained to the rank of tribune in the Imperial Cavalry, had fallen in battle against the infidels. However, no one had been able to give more accurate information about his death, until, as a result of their indefatigable efforts, it was ascertained that he had been taken prisoner by the Saracens and was now a slave in Arabia. Through Orion and his deceased father they had received confirmation of this news, and a few hours after the departure of the young Egyptian

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they had received a letter from the supposed lost one, written in a trembling hand, in which he besought them to try to effect his release through Amr, the vicegerent of Egypt. And so the old couple had started off on this journey, which Heliodora had done all in her power to persuade them to undertake. Her longing after Orion, to whom she had been devoted for more than a year with all the intensity of her tender heart, had hourly increased since his departure from Constantinople, and this fact she made no effort to conceal from Martina, who considered it her duty to assist, as far as in her power lay, the poor, love-sick child; for Heliodora had nursed her deceased husband, the senator's nephew, to the day of his death with touching tenderness and devotion, and furthermore it was she who had given the young Egyptian, at his own earnest solicitation, an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the young widow. It seemed as though the two had been made for each other, and match-making afforded her the greatest amusement. But in this case she had succeeded only in joining the two hearts, not the two hands, and it became at length extremely painful to Martina to hear Heliodora and Orion publicly and with good right spoken of as an engaged couple.

On one occasion she had reproached the young Egyptian in her charming manner about his conduct, and had received the answer that his father, a Jacobite, would never consent to his marrying a woman of different faith.

At that time she had not been able to say much in opposition to his objections; but she had often said to herself, if it were only possible to show Heliodora to the old Mukaukas, he, whom she had known as the handsome young friend of attractive young ladies many years before in the capital city, would assuredly give up his objections; and her favorite in fact possessed everything that a father's heart could desire for the wife of his beloved son. She was of good family, the widow of a distinguished man, rich, only twenty-two years old, and possessed of a beauty that must charm both young and old. A sweeter or more gentle and lovable creature Martina did not know. Her large, liquid eyes, she called them "beseeching," would melt a stone, and her wavy, blonde hair was as soft as her character was amiable. And besides there was her round and lithe form, and how tastefully she dressed, how beautifully she sung and played the lute! She had been courted by nearly every distinguished young man in Constantinople! And if the old Mukaukas could only hear her laugh once! There was nothing so joyous, so bell-like as her laugh! She

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was not especially intellectual, but simple she was certainly not. Women that are too smart are never very desirable.

As soon as the trip to Egypt had been definitely settled, Martina made up her mind to take Heliodora with her, and to make an accomplished fact in Memphis of the gossip that had put the name of her darling in the mouth of all the people. As soon as she had heard in Alexandria that the Mukaukas was dead she considered the game won. Now she was in Memphis, with Orion seated at her side, the young man having already invited to his house both herself and her suite, consisting of about twenty persons. It was self-evident that the travelers would comply with this invitation or rather demand of hospitality, and preparations for the removal were at once begun.

Justinus explained what had brought them to Egypt and requested Orion's assistance.

Orion had been well acquainted with the senator's nephew in the capital, and knew that he was one of the most brilliant and attractive of young men, and it gave him the deepest pain to have to inform his old friends that Amr, who could easily effect the liberation of the young man, would start on a journey to Medina the day after to-morrow, and that he himself was also compelled to leave Memphis for an indefinite time.

He perceived how this firmly expressed determination excited and saddened the old couple, and upon being earnestly pressed by the senator, he told his wife and himself, under the seal of the most absolute secrecy, what was taking him away and what a dangerous problem he had undertaken to solve.

He had begun, confident of the approval of his orthodox friends, but to his astonishment both of them disapproved of his plan for many weighty reasons besides on their own account, and on account of the help they had hoped to obtain from him.

The senator called his attention to the fact that he was the natural head of the Egyptian people in his home, and that he would sacrifice by such a procedure his ascendancy among those whose leader he should rightfully be as son of the Mukaukas. His ambition should urge him on to attain to this leadership, and instead of directly resisting the will of the patriarch by such an adventure, it was his duty to attempt to render sufferable the condition of his fellow-Christians in this land, under the sway of the Mussulman, by aiding the patriarch, with all his might, and that he greatly underrated the power of the prelate. Paula's name had during all this conversation not been mentioned, but Orion thought of her and

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remained firm, although he felt a strong and deep-seated aversion to the undertaking.

In order, however, to show his friends how much interest he felt in their affair, and how ready he was to lend them aid, he proposed to them to drive with Justinus across the Nile at once, and submit the matter to Amr, the vicegerent. A glance out of the window at once warned him that the sun was only about one hour and a half high. With his fleet-footed Pannonians the drive would not require a longer time, and during his absence with Justinus they might arrange the removal of the guests to the governor's palace. Baggage-wagons from the palace were already standing at the door of the inn, and carriages had been ordered, later, to carry the honored guests into their new quarters.

The senator accepted the young man's proposal, and as they were about to withdraw, Martina called out to Orion:

"The senator will argue with you on the way, and if you will be reasonable you shall have a handsome reward! Do not spare your gold, my dear husband, until the commander has promised to undertake the release of our nephew! Listen to me, Orion, and give up this foolish idea!"

The sun had not yet quite disappeared behind the Libyan mountains when the four panting steeds, all covered with foam, again entered the court-yard of the governor's palace. Unfortunately the gentlemen had met with no success, for Amr was absent reviewing some troops between Heliopolis and Onice, and was not expected before night, or early the next morning.

The moving from the inn had been completed, and among the (for the most part) mulatto and black slaves at the palace might now be seen the white slaves of the senatorial pair.

Mme. Martina was delighted with her new apartments, and the gorgeous flowers, many of which were unknown to her, with which the sick lady of the house had caused the two large reception-rooms to be adorned, as a greeting of welcome to her honored guests, but the unsuccessful visit to Fostat fell like mildew upon her joyous spirits. She declared that Orion must look upon this evil star as a judgment from God. Heaven itself wishes him to give up the adventure and content himself with the preparation for a noble work, which might be carried out without his assistance, in order to carry to a successful issue on the ground of friendship, if for no other reason, another undertaking that urgently required his support; he, however, again expressed his regret at being compelled to adhere to his plan firmly, and when Martina inquired: "Even if my

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present to you is an extraordinarily splendid one?" he nodded to her sadly, and replied:

"Alas, even in that case!"

She then lightly remarked that they would see, and continued in a more emphatic manner:

"Every one has something that constitutes his individuality and suits him especially. You, your amiability, my dear son. It does not suit you to be so obstinate, it is extremely unattractive, and is exactly the opposite of what I call amiable. Be like yourself in this case as in others."

"That is to say, weak and ready to give way, especially when kind ladies—"

"When old friends make a request of you," she rejoined, promptly; but before she had finished speaking she turned to her husband and exclaimed: "Heavens, husband, just come to the window! Have you ever seen such a mixture of purple and gold in the heavens? It looks as if the old pyramids and the whole of Egypt were in flames. But now, great Sesostris!" —she called Orion by this name when she was in a good humor —"it is time to show you what we have brought with us for you. First, this ornament," and as she spoke she handed him a bracelet set with jewels of antique Greek workmanship, "and then—no, no, no thanks yet—and then— This thing is rather large, and besides— Come with me, please." And so saying, she stepped out of the parlor into the vestibule, and led the way to the door of the room which Paula first, and then he himself had occupied. She opened the door slightly, made a sign on the inside, and pushed Orion gently into the room, exclaiming hastily: "Look, there you have it!"

Heliodora was standing close by the window. The soft reflection of the setting sun bathed her slender and yet full and lithe form in tender light, her beseeching eyes met his with their thoughtful radiance, and her arms, folded upon her bosom, gave her the appearance of a saint who was anxiously and humbly awaiting a miracle in anticipation of indescribable joy.

The eyes of Martina also remained fixed upon him, and she noticed how deathly pale he became at the sight of the young woman, how he collapsed as though seized by some kind of terrible, she knew not what, sensation, and how he shrunk from the apparition at the window. The good woman had not expected this surprise to have such an effect. She thought that she had never seen one so overwhelmed with love except on the stage, for she had no idea that to him it seemed as if an abyss had suddenly opened its yawning mouth before him.

Mme. Martina returned to her husband with an agility that

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one would have scarcely believed her capable of, and exclaimed before she had entered the room:

"A glorious success; everything is all right! When he first saw her it seemed as if he had been struck by lightning. Watch out; we are going to have a wedding here on the banks of the Nile!"

"My blessing upon it," added the senator; "but no matter about the wedding, if she can only prevail upon the noble youth to abstain from this fool-hardy undertaking! I noticed that even those brown fellows over there across the river bowed before him; and if any one can prevail upon the vicegerent to champion the interests of Narses, he certainly can. He must under no circumstances leave us! You have impressed the importance upon Heliodora of his—"

"Being persuaded to remain here?" laughed Martina. "I tell you she will nail him down here if that be necessary."

"Advance then to the breach!" replied Justinus. "But, wife, it is hardly proper for you, as it were, to force them together. You are properly, so to speak, her female mentor, her maternal protector."

"Great heavens!" rejoined Martina. "They never invited persons to be present at their meetings at home. These poor love-sick people must be allowed to have at least one long conversation alone and enjoy to the utmost seeing each other again! After awhile I shall again interfere, and shall again become the anxious maternal friend. Line! Line! If we have a wedding here I shall most assuredly make a pilgrimage in my bare feet to Saint Agathe."

"And I shall do the same with only one shoe on!" added the senator; "for— Everything that is right— But these reports about Dora toward the last surpassed the boundaries of endurance. It was scarcely any longer possible to see the two together alone. But you —No, really! Go in there now—"

"Presently, presently!" said Martina. "But just come here to the window once more! Oh, that sun! Now it is too late. Two minutes ago the whole heavens looked as red as my new red cloak. Now all is veiled in darkness. The house, the garden are pretty, and everything is old and massive; it is just as I have always imagined the home of the rich Mukaukas!"

"So have I!" rejoined Justinus. "But you must go now. If they become united, Dora can certainly congratulate herself!"

"That is exactly my opinion also!" exclaimed Martina. "But her villa need not be neglected either; and they can spend their summers there. I mean to arrange that. If our

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poor dear Narses only does not lose his life, for two years of slavery means a great deal, then I might be in a position—"

"To alter your last will? So serious it is not; but there is no hurry about that, and you can go now and interrupt them!"

"Presently, directly! One ought to be allowed to finish talking. I for my part do not know any one whom I would rather put in Narses's place—"

"Than Orion and Dora? Well, as far as I am concerned, do so; but now—"

"Perhaps it is wrong to place one even in thought among the dead while he is still alive. In no event can we permit the poor boy to return to his position in the cavalry."

"Under no condition; but, Martina—"

"To-morrow Orion will lay before the Arabian our matter with his most cordial support—"

"If he only remains here!"

"Shall we lay a wager that she will keep him here?"

"Do you consider me a fool?" laughed the senator. "Do I ever get anything from you when I bet and win? But now, joking aside, go and look after them."

This time Martina complied with her husband's request, and she would have won the bet, for the sweet flattery of Heliodora had beguiled him into doing what neither the letter of his sister-in-law nor the warning voice of his child-like faith, nor the faithful advice of an honest officer, nor the convincing grounds assigned by the senator had been able to move him to do.

How her loving heart had burst forth into flames when she saw how deeply he had been moved by the sight of her, with what touching devotion she had sunk into his arms, with what humility and sweet sadness and still sweeter joy had she sunk at his feet, embraced his knees, and with eyes moist and full of rapturous devotion besought him not to leave her to-day, to stay just until to-morrow, and then, if he wished, to trample her into the dust. Now just at this time when she, overwhelmed with pain and longing, had found him again, to forsake her, to see him hurl himself into the arms of an uncertain fate, would be her death; she could not survive it. And when he still tried to resist her she threw herself into his arms, covered his mouth with passionate kisses and called him by all those affectionate names that had once been so dear to him.

Why had he never seriously tried to make her his own? Why had he so soon forgotten her? Because she who had understood so well how to preserve her dignity with the utmost care so far as others were concerned had yielded herself to him without resistance, as if she were under the influence of some magic

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power after she had seen him only once or twice. The costly booty that had been so easily taken soon became less valuable to him. But to-day exactly that which had formerly cooled his ardor now inflamed him. It was thus he desired to be, it was thus he must be loved. With full and complete devotion, with a heart that thought of him alone and not of itself, that for warm love demanded nothing but love in return, that did not anxiously surround itself with barriers and appeal to others for advice to protect itself against him. This beautiful young woman, full of passion, who had treated with contempt the verdict of society, who had taken upon herself sorrow and suffering for the sake of one whom she knew would never make her his own in the eyes of God and of men; yes, she understood how to love, and it exalted him who often was about to despair of himself to feel his heart thus prized above all else, to be—he would scarcely acknowledge it to himself—thus "deified." And how charming, how wholly feminine she was!

The "beseeching" eyes of which he had grown tired in Constantinople, because they had been full of the same touching and beseeching look when she was begging him not to leave her as when she requested him to throw her shawl around her shoulders, these captivating eyes that had first drawn him to her, again assumed their former power and exercised upon him all their old magic.

In these moments full of tender devotion he had promised her at least to take into consideration whether he could not have himself released from the obligations which he had taken upon himself; but he had scarcely done this when he thought of Paula again, and an internal voice called to him warningly that she belonged to a higher class of humanity than this loving and weak woman who was so entirely within his power; that she meant for him improvement, but Heliodora destruction. He at length succeeded in releasing himself from the arms of his recovered friend, and after the first step out of the excitement into which he had been plunged into the world of reality, he cast his eyes about him like one waking from sleep; and it seemed to him as if some malicious evil spirit had ordained that Paula's room of all others should have been the scene of this meeting, and of his weakness.

Her inquiry after the little white dog which she had given him as a memento recalled to his mind the unfortunate emerald which had been intended as an *antidoran* or return gift for the dog; and when he evasively told her that he had remembered her passion for rare jewels and that he had sent her a specially handsome stone about which he would take an

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early opportunity to talk with her, she gave expression to her joy and thanks in such a child-like and attractive manner, she was so clever in taking advantage of his fondness for her charming tenderness in order to persuade him of the necessity of his remaining in Memphis, that he himself began to believe it and to yield to her. The more nearly this determination corresponded with his own wishes the more easily could he satisfy himself that it was well-founded.

Old Rufinus did not need him any longer; and although he, Orion, had cause to be ashamed of his vacillating mind, yet he could say to himself on the other hand that it was unkind and ungrateful toward his dear old friends to forsake them just at a time when he might be serviceable to them. Two strong arms could not be a matter of much importance to the nuns, while poor imprisoned Narses, without his assistance and intercession with the commander, might be lost before he could be released. At any rate it was time for him to make a final decision. No, he could not leave to-day!

It was decided!

Rufinus must be at once informed of this change in his plans.

It seemed perfectly impossible to him to sit down and write at such a time. The secretary of the treasury must perform the duty in his name; and he well knew how gladly Nilus would undertake it.

Heliodora clapped her hands; and just as Martina knocked at the door the two appeared. She beaming with joy, and so charming in her rich, fashionable, and carefully selected clothes, and in spite of her insignificant stature so princely and handsome that she would have won the admiration of the gentlemen and the envy of the ladies even in the capital; he in gay spirits, but still with a meditative smile upon his lips.

He had scarcely closed the door when he observed just in the space before the room which Paula had formerly occupied two female figures. They were little Catharine and her maid.

After young Anubis had fallen from the roof they had provided a place for him in this part of the establishment; and in spite of the preparation of the apartments for the distinguished guests Dr. Philippus could not be persuaded to consent to the removal of the poor boy, who was in need of perfect quiet, into the story below.

The mother of the severely punished eavesdropper—Catharine's nurse—was with him; the little humming-bird, with her maid, had accompanied her, and she would have been delighted if she could have incidentally ascertained whether her foster

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brother had heard any news before his fall; but the poor boy was so weak and his pain so severe that she could not find courage to worry him with questions.

But the benevolent walk of the little Samaritan was not to be entirely in vain; for to see Orion emerge from Paula's former room with such a beautiful and aristocratic-looking woman was something of unusual interest which made it worth her while to open her eyes. She would willingly have gone twice the distance to the governor's palace merely to see the clothes and the ornaments of this strange lady who, it seemed, had fallen from the skies. Such a one rarely strayed into Memphis; and she asked herself whether this handsome and striking-looking woman might not possibly be "the other one" and not Paula? Might not Orion have been coquetting with Paula as he had done with her? An extremely affectionate meeting must have taken place in that room, for every feature of the saint-like face of the blonde beauty betrayed deep emotion. Oh, this Orion! She could have choked him; but it gave her ineffable pleasure to think that there were others, and such charming, brilliant ladies, whom he had likewise deceived.

"He is going to stay!" called out Heliodora to Martina before she had even entered the door; and the latter extended her hand to the young man and said, with deep emotion:

"May God bless you for it!"

She rejoiced, too, at the joyous countenance of her niece; but at the same time the eyes of the watchful lady were in every place; and when she observed Catharine, who was standing near by, full of curiosity, she spoke to her kindly, and asked Orion:

"A sister, or the little niece of whom you spoke?"

The young man called Catharine up and introduced her to his guests; she, however, explained at once what had brought her there, and did it in such an attractive and heartfelt manner—for she was sincerely attached to her foster-brother—that she gained the affection of Martina and Heliodora forthwith, and the latter expressed the hope that she would see her very often. Yes: after Catharine had withdrawn, Martina exclaimed:

"Fresh and neat, just as if she had just leaped out of her shell; quick and bright, and how sweetly she chatters!"

"And besides, the richest heiress in Memphis, perhaps even in Egypt," added Orion. But when he observed how Heliodora cast her eyes down at this remark, he continued, laughingly: "Her mother had determined us for each other, but we

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differ too much in size, and we do not suit each other in other respects."

He then excused himself to the ladies, and betook himself to Nilus, and informed him of his determination. His request to present his excuses to Rufinus for his failure to make his appearance, to present his compliments to the daughter of Thomas, and to represent in the strongest light the grounds that had brought him to this decision caused the gentle, modest man to go beside himself almost for joy and to presume to throw his arms around Orion as if he were his own son.

The young man remained with his guests until almost midnight, and when, on the following morning, Martina saw her protégée somewhat fatigued but still happy, she was able to inform her that the gentleman had already driven across the Nile, and it was to be hoped that they had arranged everything with the vicegerent. Her disappointment was, however, very great, when after a short time both gentlemen returned and informed them that Amr, after the review of the troops, instead of returning to Fostat, had gone straight on to Alexandria; that he would have business for several days in that city, and would then go on to Medina.

Nothing now remained for the senator to do but without delay to set out after the commander; and Orion offered of his own accord to accompany him thither.

Heliodora's short effort to keep him back was wrecked upon his earnest and even harsh decisiveness. This journey was merely a flight from his own weakness and from the beautiful woman who could not and ought not to be anything to him now. Early in the morning he had found opportunity to write to Paula, but more than one half-completed letter had been cast aside before he could find the proper words. He told her that he loved her and her alone, and while he traced the words in the wax he had felt, with contempt for himself, that his heart in fact belonged to Paula alone, and determined finally to rend asunder the bands that bound him to Heliodora, and not to show himself again to his beloved until he had succeeded in forever freeing himself from the feeling that he felt for the young widow.

The ladies had accompanied the travelers to the carriage, and as they were returning into the large front hall, with heads bowed down like defeated warriors, they met the little humming-bird with her maid. Martina wanted to stop the young girl and persuade her to accompany them to their apartments; but Catharine would not consent, and appeared to be in a great hurry. She had just come from her foster-brother Anubis,

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who was suffering less pain to-day than he had suffered yesterday, and had imparted to her as well as he could all that he had been able to hear. It was certain that the flight would be in a northerly direction; but he had either not heard or had forgotten the name of the destination of the nuns.

His mother and nurse had been sent out of the room, and then the grateful little humming-bird bent over him, raised her handsome head slightly, and gave him two such sweet kisses that the poor boy became quite uneasy. But when he again found himself alone with his mother he grew better and better, and the recollection of the incomprehensible good fortune that had fallen to his lot diminished more and more the great pain that he had suffered for Catharine's sake.

She, however, by no means returned straight to her mother, but betook herself without delay to the Bishop of Memphis and narrated to him everything she had heard touching the occupants of the convent of St. Cecilia and all that was being undertaken in their behalf; and the gentle Plotinus during the course of her narrative became so angry that he, immediately after she had left him, hastened across to Fostat for the purpose of securing the assistance of the vicegerent, and as he was absent, that of Wekil, his representative, and to persuade him to cause the flying nuns to be at once pursued.

When the humming-bird was alone in her room she said to herself, with a feeling of great satisfaction, that she had just completed a device that would destroy many a happy day for both Paula and Orion; ay, she hoped it would even prove a very serious thing for them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FLIGHT OF THE NUNS.

NILUS, the secretary of the treasury, had punctiliously carried out his duty, and Rufinus was compelled to acknowledge that Orion had done all he could, and had so circumspectly and in so self-sacrificing a manner provided for the preparations necessary for the undertaking, that his personal presence and assistance seemed to be superfluous.

Under these circumstances he could not blame the young man for placing himself at the service of his Byzantine friends; but still his remaining behind disturbed him and made him feel uneasy, less on account of himself and of the good cause than on Paula's account, whose affection for Orion it had been impossible to conceal, as well from his wife as from him. His failure to attend the nuns appealed much more nearly to

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Johanna than to Rufinus; and she would now have much preferred his taking no part whatever in the adventure, the dangers of which had now assumed tenfold greater proportions in her anxious frame of mind. But she well knew that she might much more easily turn the current of the Nile backward than persuade him to retract the promise that he had given the abbess, and so she compelled herself to be composed, at least as far as appearances went. Rufinus declared in Paula's presence that Orion's withdrawal from the adventure was perfectly justifiable, and spoke in glowing terms of how generously he had provided for a river boat and a sea vessel, and what a trustworthy substitute he had secured for himself.

Pulcheria was proud of her father's determination, and would most willingly have gone along with him and lent her aid to rescuing her beloved nuns. The wharf-master had brought with him not only his two sons, but three other Greeks of the same faith and trade as himself, who by reason of the lowness of the water in the river, which always caused a great decrease in the amount of navigation on the river, were without work, and willingly took part in such an undertaking, which besides promised to reward them handsomely, for Orion had provided the old sailor with an abundance of money.

Paula had grown much better by reason of the coolness that always follows the setting of the sun.

She was, to be sure, unable to explain the change in Orion's plans. At times she became very uneasy, and then again she would rejoice, for he would escape a great many dangers. She had heard him speak shortly after his return from Constantinople in the highest terms of the kindness and hospitality of the senatorial pair, and had heard the Mukaukas, to whom his recollections of the Imperial City were very dear, express his emphatic approval.

It must be a great satisfaction to him to be able to assist these friends above all others; and Nilus, who was respectfully attached to her, had given special prominence to the messages that Orion had sent her. Perhaps he would come to see her to-morrow; and the oftener she repeated to herself his statement that he had never in his life proved himself unworthy of the confidence of his friends, the stronger did her impulse become to throw aside all apprehension in spite of the advice of the abbess, to follow the inclination of her heart, and to become his with full confidence and ineffable joy without further delay.

The waning moon had not yet risen, and the night was dark when the departure of the nuns commenced.

The large Nile boat, on account of the low condition of the

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river, was compelled to anchor at some distance from the bank of the convent garden, and the sisters, who had dressed themselves in the costumes of Egyptian peasant women, had to be carried on board the boat one by one. They had kept the abbess for the last to be borne through the shallow water near the bank; and the old wharf-master had reserved for himself the privilege of performing this service for her.

Johanna, Pulcheria, the nurse, and Eudoxia, the zealously orthodox Greek governess, all stood around while the abbess gave Paula one last fond kiss and whispered to her:

"God bless you, my child! He is going to stay with you; and so there will be double need of your remembering your promise."

And when Paula replied, in gentle tones: "I owe him first a friendly confidence," the abbess rejoined:

"And yourself firmness and prudence."

Rufinus remained on shore the last one; and his wife and daughter hung about his neck.

"Let this child be an example for you!" exclaimed the old man to his wife, while he drew her tenderly to his bosom. "As surely as man is the measure of all things, my dearest old woman, so surely will all go well with me if the eternal love that rules over us does not slumber. Good-bye, you best of good women; and if any harm befalls your foolish old husband, then just comfort yourself by saying that he brought it upon himself for the purpose of warding off from twenty-five innocent persons the greatest of misfortunes. In any event I shall keep in the path that I have chosen for myself. But why didn't my dear Philippus come to say good-bye to me?"

And then Johanna commenced to weep bitterly, and said:

"That, that too is so sad! How comes it that he has grown so cold toward us, and just at this time? Ah, dear husband, if you love me, take Gibbus along with you!"

"Yes, master, take me with you," interrupted the crippled gardener. "Before we get back the Nile will probably rise; and until then the flowers can wither without my help. I dreamed last night that you plucked a rose off of my hump. It grew right on top of it just like the button on the top of a dish-cover. That means something; and if you leave me here at home what will become of the rose—that is, how can you obtain any good through me?"

"Go, then; carry your wonderful flower-bed aboard. I have no objection," said the old fellow, laughing. "Are you contented now, Johanna?"

And then he drew her and Pulcheria again to him, and when

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he felt a tear from his wife's eye fall upon his hand he whispered in her ear:

"You have been the rose of my life, and without thee there will be for me no blessed Eden, no Paradise."

The large Nile boat stood out into the deep current of the river, and soon the darkness hid it from the eyes of the women who remained standing on shore.

The sound of the convent bells followed the fugitives—it was Paula and Pulcheria who had set them in motion.

Not a breeze was stirring, even the small sails of the Nile boats descending the river could not be spread; but the sailors pulled the oars vigorously, and so the ship glided further and further toward the north. The experienced leader stood on the prow of the boat with a long pole in his hand to sound the current, his skilled brother at the rudder. The steering of the boat was very difficult on account of the shallowness of the water, and even the most experienced pilot might easily run afoul of unexpected shallows or of newly heaped-up piles of refuse and mud. The moon had scarcely risen when the boat stuck fast a few *stadia* below Fostat, and the sailors had to descend into the water in order to loosen it and float it again, amid loud singing. Several times they suffered such a delay until they reached Letopolis, where they proposed to take advantage of the branching of the Nile in order, if possible, to pass the customs officers unseen. And contrary to all expectation the large vessel remained unobserved amid the dense mists that at sunrise arose from the river, and both captain and men ascribed their good fortune, as they entered the Phalmetian arm of the Nile with fresh courage, to the intercession of the sisters.

By the bright light of day the shallows were easier to avoid, yet how narrow was the channel of the stream, which ordinarily at this season of the year was full to overflowing.

The papyrus thickets along the edge of the river-bed were standing partially on dry ground, and their luxuriant green had changed itself into the yellow color of straw. The loose mud near the bank had hardened into a stony mass, and the gentle west wind that sprung up and caused the sail to expand swept a whitish dust over it. In many places the ground had split open, and deep fissures traversed its black surface, seeming to open their thirsty throats toward heaven with an expression of suffering eagerness.

The water-wheels stood on dry ground along the stream, which had withdrawn itself from them, and the fields, which a short time before had been watered by them, looked like the

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threshing-floors upon which the grain was usually threshed out, grain which they had produced. Above the villages and the palm groves hovered a smoky vapor that glowed with a hot yellow light, and travelers along the high embankments on the shores proceeded with heads bowed down and with heavy feet through the deep sand of the road.

The sun cast down its scorching rays with merciless force from the cloudless skies upon the earth, the river, and the fugitive nuns, who had drawn their white head-cloths over their throbbing temples, and were awaiting in gloomy listlessness their unknown fates.

The earthen jar of Nile water passed from one to the other, but the more they drank the more intense did their feeling of uneasiness and their desire for new refreshment become. At meal-time the dishes were returned to the little cabin, having been scarcely touched. The abbess and Rufinus attempted to speak to them words of comfort and consolation, but in the afternoon the old lady was also overcome with faintness, but she found it less endurable in the little cabin to which she had retured than on the upper deck.

Thus a long and torturing day passed, the hottest day that the sailors could recall, and to them it brought the least amount of suffering, although they had pulled at the oars from early morning till late in the evening with the most wonderful power of endurance.

At length the evening followed upon these frightful hours of the afternoon; and then, as a little breeze of refreshing coolness arose after sunset and relieved their streaming brows, the tormented and depressed travelers awoke to new life. The present overwhelming pain had taken such complete possession of them that they felt neither fear nor hope, and had become completely incapable of thinking about the future; now they began to rejoice over the long start that they had gotten of their pursuers. The hungry travelers enjoyed the evening meal; the abbess made friends with the courageous wharfmaster, and commenced with Rufinus a long conversation about Paula and Orion. The abbess's wish to subject the young man to a period of probation did not meet with the old man's approval. At the side of such a betrothed he would prove himself without doubt to be the brave man whom he considered him to be in spite of his withdrawing from the expedition of rescue.

The crippled gardener made the younger nuns laugh by his merry jests, and after the repast they all united in evening devotion.

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The oarsmen too had gained new life and fresh strength, and it was well that only a few of the nuns understood the Egyptian language, for the jester among the sailors commenced a song of praise in honor of the beauty of his beloved which was not intended for ladies' ears.

While they were thus engaged in conversation the sisters made mention of those whom they had left behind them, and some of them spoke hopefully of the welcome that would await them upon their return to their native land; but an elderly nun reproved them for this, because it was sinful to take God's mercy as a foregone conclusion, and to speak, while they were still in such dire need, of His help as if He had already granted it to them. They should rather be afraid and pray, for she knew from experience that a threatened calamity was scarcely ever averted until great fear had been felt on its account.

Thereupon another sister began to calculate whether their pursuers could overtake them on foot or on horse; and when it appeared that the latter was quite possible their hearts again began to beat with anxiety and apprehension. But soon the moon arose, and everything along the banks of the river began to assume a more definite shape, and thereby lost much of its terror. The further they journeyed, the denser appeared the papyrus thickets along the shore. Thousands of birds had their nests there, but they were all now asleep; and how tangible did the deep, silent darkness that brooded over the face of the earth appear! The reflection of the moon floated upon the face of the dark waters like a gigantic water-lily among smaller, sweet-smelling lotus-flowers, which it excelled in its dazzling whiteness; the boat left behind it a furrow of light, and at every stroke of the oars the river glittered, and the refracted light was mirrored in the sparkling drops. The refulgence of the constellation of the night played among the tender tufts on the tops of the slender papyrus stalks, veils of mist, as though made of delicate silver and violet brocade, hung around the trees, and from the tree-tops flew the day-dreading owls with noiseless and gracefully moving wings.

The magic spell of the moonlight took possession of the souls of the nuns also.

Their conversation came to an end; but when Sister Martha, the young nightingale of the cloister, began to sing a sacred song, the others with one accord joined in. The comic songs of the sailors ceased, and the sound of the psalms and hymns of the virgin sisters, calling upon the Most High for His protecting care, hovered about the boat as it quietly glided on like the ever-changing moonlight.

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For hours, and whilst the comet was visible in the sky, with special zeal they gave themselves up to the quieting and soul-strengthening joy of singing; but gradually their voices began to lose strength, and their peaceful song moved on toward the sea with the quiet flow of the stream, gently, dreamily, and languidly. They all either cast their eyes down or directed them toward heaven with a look of pious devotion, or at the glimmering water and the lilies upon its surface.

No one was watching the shore, not even the men whom the sweet singing had lulled into dreams or quiet sleep. The eyes of the pilot were fixed upon the bed of the stream, but when dawn was no longer far off, there appeared ever and anon from behind the reed thickets on the eastern shore light like the tremulous flashes of lightning, and from time to time a rattling, rustling noise came forth from the reeds.

Had a jackal plunged into the thick mass of luxuriant undergrowth for the purpose of robbing the nest of some water-fowl, or was some hyena breaking for himself a path through the thicket?

These flashes, this rattling noise, and then those dull strokes upon the hardened earth, all this followed the boat during the night like some luxurious, sonorous shadow foreboding a terrible calamity. Suddenly the captain of the boat started and gazed fixedly toward the east.

What could it be?

May be a herd of cattle was pasturing in the fields beyond the reed thickets, and perhaps two bulls were whetting each other's horns in combat. The river was so low and its banks were so high that one could not perceive what was going on beyond. But now a shrill voice called to him, and the crippled gardener gave heed to it:

"There, there—it flashes again, and—I will eat my own nose if it is not— There again— Merciful God! I am not deceived; it is the tramping of horses! And there—that was the neighing of horses. I know it—it is growing gray in the east. By all the saints, we are being pursued!"

The captain continued to gaze anxiously toward the east, straining every sense, and after he had remained silent for some time he uttered a decisive "Yes."

"It is thus the bird-trapper spreads a net for a covey of partridges," sighed the gardener; but the other commanded him to keep quiet by a gesture of impatience, and continued to watch attentively. He then ordered the cripple to awaken Rufinus and the men, and to conduct the nuns into the cabin.

"They will have to be packed in like dates that are shipped

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in boxes to Rome," the gardener murmured to himself as he went in search of Rufinus. "Poor souls, may their saints protect them from suffocation! and I, upon my honor, if Madame Johanna were not such a brave soul, and if I had not promised her on oath to remain with my master, I would now spring into the water and enjoy for a short time the hospitality of the flamingoes and storks among the reeds. One must understand how to accommodate one's self to circumstances!"

While he was engaged in the execution of his orders, the captain held a consultation with his brother at the helm. Fortunately there was no bridge near by. If the horsemen were in pursuit of them they would have to pass through the water to reach them; and scarcely three *stadia* down the stream the river became broader and entered a swampy region. The only deep, navigable water lay on the western shore of the river; and the horsemen who should attempt to reach that point would expose themselves to the danger of sinking in the mire. If they could succeed in getting the ship that far much would have been gained.

The captain, brave and intent upon matters of serious import, began to encourage the sailors to exert all their strength, and soon the boat was close to the western shore of the stream, and separated from the other side by a marshy strip of land.

And now day began to break, and the sky assumed a fiery, red color, as though it wished to announce in advance that this day had been destined to witness terrific strife and gaping wounds.

The seed that "the little humming-bird" had sown now began to spring up.

Wekil, at the instance of the bishop, had sent a detachment of cavalry in pursuit of the nuns, with orders to escort the fugitives back to Memphis, and to take those who accompanied them prisoners. As the vessel had passed the customs officers unobserved, the Arabian force was compelled to divide, in order to search the other arms of the Nile. Twelve horsemen had followed the Phalmetian arm, and such a number according to every calculation would be amply sufficient to reduce to subjection two dozen women and a handful of sailors, who would scarcely think of offering resistance. Wekil had no knowledge of the presence of the wharf-master and his men.

The pursuers had started about noon of the day before, and had come in sight of the ship two hours before the break of day. But their commander considered it more prudent not to attempt to capture the fugitives before the sun had risen, in order that none might escape them. He, as well as his men,

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were Arabians, and were well acquainted with the direction of the arm of the Nile which they had to follow, but not with its characteristic peculiarities. As soon as the morning star had set, the Mussulmen performed their morning devotions, and then broke forth from the papyrus thicket. Their leader placed his hand to his mouth as a speaking-trumpet, and called out to the people on the boat to stop. He had come at the command of the vicegerent, and had orders to conduct the boat back to Fostat.

And the fugitives seemed in fact to be inclined to obey him, for the boat stood still. The captain had recognized in the speaker the commander of the guards of Fostat, a man of decision, and now for the first time he realized in what a deadly enterprise he had consented to take part. Accustomed to render obedience to the commands of his rulers, and perhaps to impose upon officers, but to offer them as little resistance as to fate itself, he declared that resistance would be madness, and that nothing remained for them to do but to surrender.

But Rufinus opposed him with vehemence, and represented to him that the same punishment would await them, whether they laid down their arms or defended themselves, and the old wharf-master exclaimed, earnestly:

"We built your boat, and I know you, Setnau; you will not play the part of Judas toward us; but still if you do, Christian blood will flow upon this deck before we show our teeth to the infidels."

Thereupon the captain began to beat his breast and his brow with all the impetuosity of his southern blood, and to rail against himself as a lost and deluded man, and to bewail his poor wife and his children; but Rufinus put an end to his madness. He had talked with the abbess and earnestly represented to the unhappy man that he could in no event expect mercy from the infidels, but on the other hand might easily expect to find on Christian soil a comfortable and secure means of support for himself and his family. The abbess would give him her promise to take him and his family on board of the sea vessel and convey them to any port that he might designate. And then Setnau bethought himself of his brother in Cyprus; but it meant for him the giving up of his house and his garden in Dumiat, where, just at that time, the fruit upon fifty palm-trees was beginning to ripen; it meant also the giving up of his new and well-built Nile boat, by means of which he found support for himself and his loved ones, and when he represented this to the old man, bitter tears began to flow down his brown cheeks. But Rufinus explained to him that if they succeeded

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in rescuing the nuns he would have a claim to compensation for his losses. He might then set his own value upon his property, and the loss should not only be made good out of the cloister treasures within the heavy chest on the boat, but a handsome sum should be paid him in addition by way of indemnity.

Thereupon Setnau exchanged a deep-meaning glance with his brother, who was an unmarried man, and upon receiving the assurance that he, too, would be taken on board the sea vessel, he seized the right hand of the old man and shook it vigorously. And then he shook himself, as if he had to rid himself of something that was incommoding him, boldly drew his leather cap a little to one side upon his closely shaven head, drew himself up to his full height, and called out in a tone of sarcasm to the Arabian, who, on more than one occasion before had exhibited an insulting insolence both to himself and his fellow Egyptians, that if he would like to have anything from him he might come and get it for himself.

The patience of the Mussulmen had long been exhausted, and after this challenge the leader gave the sign to his men to follow, and he sprung into the water; but the advance horses soon sunk so deep in the mud that it at once became evident that to proceed further was impracticable, and the sign for a retreat was given, and, in turning, an unruly horse tumbled down, and its rider was suffocated in the mire.

Then the defender of the ship saw their enemies hold a council of war, accompanied by excited gestures, and the captain expressed an apprehension that they proposed to give up all idea of capturing the boat, would ride to Dumiat, and there, in conjunction with the Arabian garrison of the place, would cut off their flight. But he had failed to take into account the war-like pride of these men, who had in twenty battles overcome quite different obstacles. The boat must be captured, its occupants taken prisoners and punished according to their deserts. From the ship they saw six of the horsemen, and among them the commander, dismount from their horses, and with their battle-axes fell three large palm-trees, while the other five galloped off toward the south. These were doubtless to go around the swamp and cross the river at a more favorable point, in order to attack the boat from the west, while the other five were to approach it from the east by means of the trunks of the palms.

On the right or eastern bank of the stream, where the dismounted Arabs were constructing their raft, lay firm, arable land, through which the highway to Dumiat led; on the other

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bank, near which the boat was lying, there stretched out over a large space a swamp. A boundless thicket of papyrus, reed and cane, which the heat and the drought of this year had singed into yellow straw, covered in most places the parched and hardened moorland, and as a strong east wind was beginning to blow from the north-east, suddenly a happy thought struck the captain. The five horsemen who had been sent out against them had to force their way through these yellow and dried-up masses of plants.

If this thicket of straw were set fire to on yonder side of the canal, which would prevent its spreading toward the north, the wind would drive it in the faces of the horsemen, and they would be fortunate if it did not suffocate them or compel them to leap into the river, in which, if the flames reached them near the swampy region, they must necessarily be irretrievably lost.

As soon now as the sharp eye of the pilot saw from the head of the mast that the Arabians were crossing the river at a ford further toward the south, the order was given and the thicket set fire to in several places. Quickly and wildly the flames began to roar. The east wind drove them toward the south, and with a grayish-white vapor, through which the rays of the ascending sun pierced their way like streams of light. Like yellow and red giant lizards in wild flight the flames crawled, rushed on, and whirled across the parched land, mounting high up in one place and sinking down in another. Dull by reason of the brightness of the day, they devoured ravenously whatever lay in their way; the white dust of ashes marked out the path they had pursued. Their breath increased the scorching heat of the advancing day, and although the smoke, swept by the wind, rushed impetuously toward the south, yet a few small clouds reached the boats, threatening to stifle the nuns and their protectors.

A large Nile boat approached from the direction of Dumiat, and found the narrow water-course obstructed by the other. Its captain was a relative of Setnau, and when the latter called out to him that he and his party were about to engage in battle with some Arabian robbers, he followed Setnau's advice, turned his boat around with great difficulty, and anchored at the first convenient spot, for the purpose of warning other boats coming from the north not to become entangled in this dangerous adventure. The fire and smoke prevented all approach from the south.

The six warriors on the eastern shore saw the ever-increasing conflagration with rage and terror; but they had already bound

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together the palm-logs and prepared with the help of the raft thus constructed to inflict upon these impudent and refractory men the chastisement they so richly deserved. But they had not remained idle. Every man on board was armed, and one of the ship-builders, accompanied by a sailor, had been sent out with orders to creep through the thicket, cross the river further toward the north, and, when the Arabians commenced the attack, to kill their horses or, if one of them should attempt to get into the only road leading to Dumiat, to smite him down from his horse. And now these six men seized on to the lightly constructed raft upon which their quivers and bows were lying. They pushed it before them, and it held them above the shallow water, while their feet barely touched the marshy soil. They were all true warriors, true sons of the desert and of their race, people, as though nature, when she created them, had before her mind's eye her master-work among winged creatures. Sharp-sighted, strong, and yet with small bones, free from every fiber of superfluous flesh upon their muscular limbs, with brown, sly and sharply cut features, in which not only the curved nose reminded one of the king among birds, but they possessed also the courage and the bloody lust for strife and the thirst for prey characteristic of the eagle.

Each one grasped the raft with his lean, muscular left arm, and with their round shields upon their right arms they received the arrows which began to shower upon them as soon as they came within shooting range of the boat. They gnashed their white teeth angrily, and not the minutest detail of all that was going on in front of them escaped their sharp, eagle eyes. They would have advanced to the attack, even if the ship had been defended by fifty Egyptian soldiers instead of twenty or more sailors and mechanics.

Their brave hearts felt that they were protected by their coats of mail, and their inventive, quick-thinking heads by their brazen helmets, and they heard with contempt and joy the dull bound of the arrows against their brazen shields. To inflict death was the dearest wish of their hearts, and to suffer death had no terror for them; for in paradise beyond they saw in their glowing imaginations transcendently beautiful women, with outstretched arms and overflowing cups, offering to them the realization of every desire.

Their sharp ears understood the soft command of their leader, and as soon as they had reached the side of the boat, one of them climbed up to the cabin-window that stood open; quick as the wind the leader had sprung upon his shoulder,

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and thence upon the deck of the ship, after having thrust his lance through a sailor, who had raised his battle-ax against him. A second Arab followed close upon his heels, two smooth, curved blades flashed in the sun, the shrill sound of the angry Mussulman battle-cry cleaved the air, and as the first victim of their terrific wrath the captain fell backward to the deck with a gaping wound upon his forehead and face; but a few moments later a heavy sail-yard thundered down upon the head of the Arabian leader, and brought him to the deck. The pilot, the brother of the unfortunate Egyptian, with the rage of an avenger, had hurled it from aloft.

Frightful noises now filled the ship, amid which the shrieks and lamentations of the nuns were heard. The second Mussulman, with the courage and strength of despair, spread death around him, and three more of his companions succeeded in climbing up into the boat; the parties attacked thrust the last one back into the water. Already two of the ship-builders and five of the sailors had fallen. Rufinus had knelt down by the captain of the ship, who, covered with blood, but perhaps not yet beyond the reach of human skill, was crying piteously for help, and began to apply linen bandages to the gaping, horrible wounds of this man, who, a short while before had spoken with tender apprehension about his wife and children, and whom Rufinus wished to restore to his loved ones. But soon the thrust of a saber came upon him, and a copious dark stream of blood gushed from the back of his head and neck. Revenge, however, followed close upon his murderer likewise; the old ship-builder felled him to the ground with his mighty ax.

On the eastern bank of the stream the messengers that had been sent out made short work of the horses of the Arabs, in order to prevent any of them who might escape from returning to Fostat or from riding further on to Dumiat and telling what had happened.

On board the ship it became quieter and quieter. All five Arabs lay upon the deck, and the frantic sailors put to death in the most merciless manner one of them who had been only wounded.

A sailor, who had taken refuge at the mast-head, had seen from his lofty position the five other Arabs, who, in order to save themselves from the flames, had sprung into the stream in the neighborhood of the marshy region, disappear in the waves. And so of all the Mussulmen not even that one, whom fate and poetry are so fond of sparing as a bearer of the terrible news, succeeded in saving his life.

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Gradually the nuns ventured to come once more upon deck. Those who were experienced in the care of the sick and wounded gathered around the unfortunate men, opened their little chests of medicines, and while the journey was continued, under the guidance and command of the pilot, all had their hands full, and in the zeal of their employment they bore with less discomfort the heat of the day.

The bodies of the five Arabs and of the eight Christians, among whom were two of the Greek ship-builders, were laid upon the shore, apart from each other, not far from a village, and in the hands of one the abbess placed a small tablet, upon which she wrote the words: "Eight Christians, who met their death in time of great peril fighting bravely as defenders of pious women, who were being pursued. Pray for them and bury them, and do the same for these likewise, who in obedience to their duty and to their commander, took their lives."

When Rufinus, whose head was resting in the gardener's lap, who protected him from the scorching rays of the sun with the abbess's umbrella, had recovered consciousness and had glanced around him, he said, murmuring gently to himself, while he cast a glance at the ship captain, who was lying near him: "I too, have a wife and a beloved child at home, and yet— How terribly it hurts! One might well torture one's self in order to mitigate such pain as that. The only thing here below that is beyond a shadow of a doubt real, ay, the only thing is not desire, it is pain, degraded physical pain, and although here within it still grows and bites beyond endurance— Water, one mouthful of water. How well it would be with me now if I were only with my Johanna in our cool and shady home. But still, still— Save, rescue, it matters not, who needs help— One swallow— Wine and water, if it be possible, worthy lady!"

The abbess had at hand what he desired, placed the cup to his mouth, spoke to him words of gratitude, sympathy and consolation, and asked him what she could do for him and his loved ones if she made good her escape.

"Love them tenderly," he rejoined gently. "Pul will now be more anxious than ever to enter a convent. But she must not leave her mother, her— Johanna, Johanna—"

He repeated this name several times, as if the sound of it soothed his ear and his heart. Then he shuddered repeatedly, and murmured:

"Oh, oh! Cold shivers again and again. That will not do. The blow in the back—the—the— On my head, there it hurts worse perhaps, but the other— Pity, that it struck the left side— No, it is well that it is so; for had it been—were it

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on the right side, then—then I could not write, and I wish to, I must—before it is too late. A tablet and a stylus! Quick, quick! And when I have finished, honored lady, close and seal the tablet firmly, very firmly. Will you promise me? Only he may read it for whom it is intended— You, Gibbus! Do you hear, Gibbus? It is for Philippus, Philippus the doctor; do you deliver it to him! The dream about the rose on your hump— Out of our misery here below—do I interpret it correctly?—shall grow peace and joy above. To Philippus then! And further, my old school-mate, Doctor Christodor, dwells in Dumiat. Carry my remains to him; do you hear, Gibbus? Tell him to put them in a casket with sand, thus the flesh will be preserved, and to bury me in Alexandria near my mother. There Johanna and my child—there they can visit me. I leave very little behind. Whatever it costs—"

"That is my, the cloister's duty!" exclaimed the abbess.

"But it isn't so bad as all that," said the old man, smiling. "All that concerns me I must pay for; your money belongs to the poor, worthy lady. You will find in this little bag, Gibbus, more than you will need. But now—quick—hasten—the tablet!"

When he had received a tablet and a stylus he first thought for quite awhile, and then exerted all his powers and wrote with trembling fingers.

How severe his pain was could be seen by his contracted mouth and his sorrowful looks; but he would not be prevented from writing, however frequently and earnestly the abbess and the gardener besought him to lay aside the stylus. At last he drew a long and easier breath, closed the folding tablet, handed it to the abbess, and said:

"So—seal it tight! To Philippus the physician. Deliver it to him and no one else; you hear, Gibbus?"

With these words he lost consciousness; but after they had freshly moistened his brow and cooled his wounds he came to himself again and murmured, softly:

"I have just dreamed of Johanna and my poor child. They brought me a comic mask. What can that mean? That I have been a fool during my whole life; because, engrossed with the sufferings of others, I forgot myself and my own fond ones? No, no, no! As surely as man is the measure of all things—if that were so—then, then would folly be all that is true and just. I—I—my will, the aim to which I devoted my life—"

Here he faltered; but then suddenly raised himself up more

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erect, turned his beaming eyes toward heaven, and exclaimed in loud and joyous tones:

"Oh, thou, my gracious Saviour! Yes, yes, yes! Now I see it— Thanks, thanks be to thee! All that I strove for, that for which I lived, for that, thou my redeemer, thou who art love itself, for that thou dost permit me— Oh, how merciful, what joy it gives me! for that thou dost permit me to die."

Again he lost consciousness; his head began to burn more hotly, his breast to rattle, and from parched lips, which the tender, watchful hands of women moistened from time to time, came forth now only the names of those he loved most, and among them the name of Paula also.

In the fifth hour of the afternoon he fell back into the lap of the crippled gardener, and his sufferings were at an end. A gentle smile played over his countenance, and the face of this old experienced traveler looked in death like that of a child.

The gardener acted as if he had lost a loving father, and his rapid tongue remained silent until he had entered Dumiat with the rescued sisters, and had faithfully carried out his master's last command.

The nuns took on board their sea vessel the wounded captain Setnau, his wife, his children, his brother, the pilot, and the ship-builders who had been spared.

In the same hour that Rufinus closed his eyes the city guard of Memphis under command of Bishop Plotinus appeared, and in the name of the patriarch Benjamin, and of the Jacobite Church, took possession of the Melchite cloister of Saint Cecilia and of the property of the pious sisters. On the following morning the bishop set out for Upper Egypt for the purpose of making his report to the ecclesiastical prince.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PLAGUE.—NEWS OF THE ATTACK UPON THE NUNS REACHES MEMPHIS.

THE physician Philippus suddenly arose from the cushion upon which he had been partaking of his breakfast in company with his old friend. A half-emptied plate was still standing before the old man; he had eaten less rapidly than Philippus, and cast a glance of disapprobation at the restless man, who was drinking his mixed wine standing. After his meals he usually delighted to sit and sip his wine with Horus Apollo and chat or engage in conversation about serious subjects.

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This had always been one of the most pleasant hours of the day to the old man; but now Philippus would scarcely allow himself time for the necessary nourishment, even at the principal meal of the evening.

To be sure, just at this time not only all his time and strength, but that of all other physicians were incessantly in demand. Almost three weeks had elapsed since the attack upon the nuns, and the insufferable heat of the summer had since that time increased. Instead of rising, the river continued to get lower and lower. The carrier-pigeons that came in from Ethiopia, and which were expected daily with apprehension and impatience, brought no news of a rise in the river even along the upper course of the stream, and the shallow, stagnant, offensive-smelling water along the shore began to become injurious and to threaten the health of the entire population.

Especially near the banks the river exhibited a reddish color, and the water in the conduits, usually so clean and agreeable to the taste, was full of strange forms of vegetable matter and other foreign substances decaying and extremely offensive. The common people generally dispensed with the trouble of filtering the water, and consequently most of them fell victims to a deadly, contagious plague which until now had never been known.

Day by day the number of victims increased, and the growth of the comet kept pace with the misfortunes of the city. Everybody connected it with the heat of this summer, with the failure of the river to overflow, and with the appearance of the plague, and with reference to this subject the doctor and his old friend often almost came to blows; for Philippus would not acknowledge that the comet could have any influence upon human life, while Horus Apollo believed the contrary, and maintained his view by a long series of examples.

His opponent would give them no weight, and demanded proofs; but like every one else he too was living under the influence of a dread of some approaching horrible catastrophe threatening the earth and the human race.

As the heart of every one in Memphis was weighed down beneath the burden of the frightful apprehensions and of a calamity that no longer threatened, but had already begun to spread abroad its woes, so heavy masses of gray, suffocating dust lay upon the roads, the gardens, the palms and sycamores along the streets. The tamarisk hedges looked like decaying walls of colorless, unburned Nile bricks, even in the chief streets the traveler was surrounded by a thick white cloud

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which had been stirred up by the motion of his feet; if a vehicle drove along or a horseman rode through the hot streets they became full of gray dust-clouds which compelled passers-by to shut their eyes and mouths.

The city was so silent, so deserted, so desolate! No one left his house unless compelled by inevitable necessity or some errand of mercy. Every house was a glowing oven, and even the bath offered no relief, because the water had long since grown warm. In addition to all this the ripening dates had been seized by a disease; they were falling by the thousands from the luxuriant bunches under the gracefully bending crown of leaves to the ground beneath, and since the day before yesterday the bodies of dead fish continued to float ashore in ever-increasing numbers. Pestilence had taken hold upon the scaly inhabitants of the water also, and the doctor explained to his friend that this threatened the people with new dangers; for who was there to remove dead fish from the river banks? and how quickly the heat of the sun would cause them to putrefy.

The old man did not conceal it from himself that it would be difficult, fearfully difficult for the doctor at such times as these to fulfill his professional duties conscientiously; but he was well acquainted with his friend Philippus, and had seen him during the months of the pestilence two years before, fresh, active, and in good spirits, ay, even buoyant by reason of the magnitude of the demands that were made upon him.

That which had changed him so entirely, which had poisoned, exasperated and imprisoned his soul, was not the almost superhumanly heavy sacrifice which duty had imposed upon him; it came from that unfortunate delusion of his heart of which he had not been able to rid himself.

Philippus kept the promise he made the old man. He went daily to Rufinus's house and daily he met Paula there; and as the wounds of a murdered man bleed afresh when the eyes of his murderer rest upon him, so each time the old pain was awakened whenever he met her and was compelled to talk with her.

Mme. Johanna and Pulcheria were much troubled about the fate of Rufinus. They had received no news either from him or from the nuns; and Philippus was the receptacle into which the forsaken wife and Pulcheria, who looked up to him as to a sympathetic, faithful, all-powerful guardian angel, poured all their cares, griefs, and apprehensions.

These had been greatly increased by the fact that already upon three occasions Arabian officers had come to their house

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and made careful inquiries about the old man and where he could be found. What the ladies said was written down; and Johanna, across whose lips a lie had never passed, saw herself compelled to make false statements and to declare that her husband had gone to Alexandria on business, and would in all probability have to go into Syria. What could these interrogatories mean? Did it not indicate that the authorities in Fostat had received information of the participation of Rufinus in the rescue of the nuns?

They were in fact better informed across the river than the ladies supposed; yet they kept secret what they did know, for the oppressed people must not learn that so few Egyptians had succeeded in overcoming such a host of Arabian warriors, and consequently the only knowledge the people of Memphis had concerning what had happened was a vague rumor.

The doctor only heard of what Rufinus was going to undertake after things had gone too far to attempt to put a stop to them; and now the thought began to torment him that his dear old friend and his family might meet with utter ruin merely for the sake of these foreign nuns; for he had secretly found out that a combat had taken place between the defenders of the fugitives and the Mussulmen, which had cost many of the combatants on both sides their lives.

And Paula! If she would only at least appear to be happy! But she had grown pale, and that which often deprived the young woman, who was sound in both mind and body, of her proud, free, and self-possessed bearing was not the all-oppressing heat but an inner, wasting sorrow, and one caused by him upon whom she had hung her heart, and who had recompensed her for this inestimable royal gift in what an unworthy manner!

Philippus was compelled to go frequently to the governor's palace; and a fortnight ago he had discovered what caused the peculiar condition of the widow of the Mukaukas. She had been taking her husband's opium, and had taken it in enormous masses, and had used another doctor for the purpose of obtaining fresh supplies. But she had succeeded by her piteous supplications in persuading Philippus not to leave her to her terrible fate; and so he continued to visit her, impelled by the desire at least to restrain her in the use of the poison.

He was also compelled to visit the governor's mansion by reason of the ill health of Martina, the wife of the senator. She was not really ill, but suffered terribly from the heat, and had been accustomed to the daily visits of her worthy old family physician, who would tell her the latest news, while she

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would make known to him her complaints whenever the slightest thing was the matter with her perfectly healthy body. The overburdened Philippus of course had no time for conversation, but his advice helped her to endure to better advantage the frightful heat of the weather. She was much pleased with this good-natured, open, prudent, and yet at times sharp and laconic man; and her fresh and natural manner was most agreeable to him. Occasionally Martina even succeeded in eliciting a smile from her "*Hermes Trismegistus,*" who usually was "so fearfully serious that one might suppose that there was no such thing as a joke upon earth," and sometimes she obtained from him an answer from which it was evident that this morose man was naturally a quick-witted, humorous fellow.

Heliodora possessed fewer attractions for Philippus. To be sure there was a striking likeness between her "beseeching eyes" and those of Rufinus's daughter, but in the latter lay a deep longing after the grace and love of God, while in the former could be perceived only a desire for human admiration.

She was without doubt an attractive woman; but her weakness in never attempting to have a purpose of her own or to assert an opinion of her own did not please his positive character; ay, it vexed him when she, after he had disagreed with her, ashamed of her own stupidity, would repeat his last sentence merely for the purpose of agreeing with him.

Her society did not seem to satisfy Martina entirely, in whose own house one visit followed another in quick succession, and to whom the notions "evening" and "bright conversation among numerous guests" were synonymous; for she already called Philippus's visits oases in her life among the Egyptian deserts, and those of little Catharine seemed to her an act of charity.

The little humming-bird became her daily guest, and during such insufferable heat her bright but often malicious gossip helped to pass away the time. Catharine's mother raised no objection to these visits; for Heliodora had called upon her arrayed in her gorgeous jewels, and had offered her and her daughter the hospitality of the Imperial City.

She might perhaps move thither; for under no circumstances could she remain in Memphis; and it was a piece of good fortune to be introduced into society by such people as her new acquaintances.

Of course Martina heard a great deal about Paula; and although it was all partial and colored to her disadvantage she would have been much pleased to have become personally ac-

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quainted with the daughter of the great and famous Thomas, whom she had known; furthermore, from what she had heard, she entertained no fears on her niece's account. Extraordinarily beautiful, yet proud, unapproachable, unamiable she was said to be, and besides an orthodox Christian like Heliodora. What could induce the "great Sesostris" to give her the preference?

Catharine had offered to make her acquaintance with the beautiful woman of Damascus; but nothing could have induced Martina to venture out of her apartments, that were protected as far as possible from the heat, into the open air, and so she left it to Heliodora (who had long been of one heart and one soul with the little girl, and in many things was subject even to her will) to tell her about the beautiful daughter of the famous hero.

This was quite possible; for the little humming-bird had had the cunning to bring the two rivals together after she had narrated to each all that she knew of Orion's relations to the other. This was a splendid joke; but in one respect she had fallen short of her aim; for Paula showed no sign whatever that she was suffering from the torment of jealousy which she had hoped to awaken within her.

On the other hand, Heliodora had returned from her visit to Paula anxious and depressed; for she had received her coolly and with polite formality; and, moreover, as a result of her visit the young widow became convinced that this extraordinary person was quite capable of obscuring her image in Orion's heart, and even of expelling it altogether. Just as a wounded man often feels his wound in order to ascertain its condition, although it pains him severely, so Heliodora often betook herself to Catharine's house for the purpose of observing her rival, or of being escorted to see her, although she never failed to meet with a cool reception.

Catharine had at first sympathized with the young widow, to whom she felt that she was intellectually superior; but that was all past now by reason of a well-defined cause, and now she hated her too, and inflicted upon her little wounds whenever it was possible. Paula, on the other hand, appeared to be invulnerable; and yet there was no sorrow that Catharine would not gladly have inflicted upon her who had been the cause of the deepest humiliation of her young life.

How could it be explained that the lady of Damascus did not seem to consider the beautiful Heliodora a dangerous rival? She had said to herself that Orion could not have remained away from this lady so long a time if he really reciprocated her

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love. For the purpose of avoiding the Byzantine beauty and of remaining to her what he was and must continue to be, he had left Memphis with the senator. This Heliodora—an inner voice told her so—was the poor, deceived woman with whom he had trifled in the capital city, and for whom he had afterward committed the fatal theft of the emerald. Should fate bring him back to her—Paula—and she grant the returned wanderer what he demanded and what her own heart so importunately urged her to bestow, then she would be the absolute queen of his heart; she must be of necessity, and of this she was certain. And if she nevertheless bowed her head, burdened with care and apprehension, she did so not from fear of losing him, but from fear concerning the fate of Pul's father and her dear old friend Rufinus and his beloved family, who had now altogether taken the place of her own.

Thus matters stood when the physician Philippus, much to the vexation of his old friend, hastily and moodily drank his after-dinner wine, and had just set the goblet down, when the black gate-keeper announced the arrival of a crippled old man, who wished to speak to his master at once about a matter of grave importance.

"A matter of grave importance?" repeated the doctor. "Give me in addition to my own legs, four more, or an instrument for extending time, and I will take new patients, otherwise I can not! Tell the messenger—"

"No, nothing about sick people, master!" interrupted the negro. "Comes from a great distance; is the gardener that belongs to the old Greek gentleman, Rufinus."

Philippus shuddered at these words. He suspected what news this messenger brought, and with an anxiously beating heart he gave the order that he should be admitted.

One glance at Gibbus told him that his suspicion was well-founded.

The poor fellow was scarcely to be recognized. He was thickly covered with dust from head to foot, and looked as if his hair and his beard had grown gray. His sandals were ragged and worn out, and the profuse perspiration had washed out channels in his face all powdered with dust, and the tears that he shed when the doctor extended his hand to him with a look of amazement washed out other ones on his cheeks.

To Philippus's pained and long-drawn, "Dead?" a silent nod of the head was the only answer given, and when the doctor placed both hands on his temples, and cried out to the gardener: "Dead! Rufinus, my poor old Rufinus, dead! But

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how, for God's sake, how did it happen? Speak, speak, man!" Gibbus pointed to the old man, and said, with firmness:

"Come outside with me, master. No one else must—"

But Philippus explained to him that this old man was his second self, and so the old cripple gave an account of all that they had gone through, and the manner in which his beloved master had met his death.

During the course of the narrative Horus Apollo shook his head repeatedly to express his disapprobation and astonishment, and Philippus uttered many an oath. Afterward the bearer of the fatal news was not interrupted, and when he had finished, Philippus, with head bowed down and eyes filled with tears, said:

"Poor, faithful old man; that he should die in this manner! that it should have befallen him, who leaves behind what is best, while I—I!"

Then he groaned aloud, but the old man cast an offended and disapproving look at him.

While Philippus was removing the seals from the tablet, which the abbess had closed with all possible care, and began to read, Horus Apollo inquired of the gardener:

"And the nuns? Did they all escape?"

"Yes, sir! On the morning after our arrival in Dumiat a trireme put to sea with them."

Then the old man muttered to himself:

"The bees lost, and the drones saved!"

But Gibbus contradicted him, and spoke in glowing terms of the active and industrious life of the nuns, in whose service he himself had once been.

In the meantime the doctor had finished reading his friend's last letter. Full of the deepest restlessness he turned it over and over, and then measured the room with rapid strides; finally he stopped short before the gardener, and said to him in accents of great excitement:

"And what now? Who is going to carry the news to them?"

"You, master," replied the poor man, stretching his hands out toward him beseechingly.

"I, of course I!" snarled the doctor. "Whatever is hard, whatever is repulsive, whatever is insufferable, falls, of course, upon my head. But I can not, I dare not, I will not do it! Did I conceive this mad adventure, or was it in any manner due to me? Don't you see, father? What he, that boy, has cooked, I—fate provides as a matter of course for that—I always have to eat!"

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"Hard, very hard, my son!" replied the old man. "But it is your duty. Just think, suppose that man, as he stands there now before us, were to appear before the ladies—"

But Philippus interrupted him:

"No, no, that wouldn't do! And you, Gibbus, you. Another Arab has been to Madame Johanna's to-day, and if they —your appearance is extraordinary—if they were once to suspect that you accompanied your master— No, man, your fidelity deserves a better reward! You must not be caught! I shall release you from Madame Johanna's service, and we—what do you say, father?—we will keep him here with us!"

"Correct, quite right!" replied the old man. "The Nile must rise again some day. Stay with us. I have been pining for a long time after vegetables raised in my own garden."

But the old cripple refused with firmness this proposal, and declared that he was determined to return to his mistress. When the doctor had explained to him again to what great dangers he would expose himself, and the old man expressed a wish to know his reasons, the gardener exclaimed: "I promised my master to stay with the ladies, and now that there is no other freedman in the house besides me, am I to leave them there alone, merely for the purpose of saving my miserable life? I would rather a crooked saber were drawn across my neck! When my head is gone all that is left, this bit of beauty, I shall not grudge the scoundrels."

At these words, which issued forth from his parched mouth with a hollow, broken sound, the face of the faithful man became distorted, his cheeks were observed to grow ashy pale, and Philippus had to support him, for his feet refused to do their duty. The long journey through the terrible heat had exhausted the strength of the old cripple, but a draught of wine soon restored him to himself again, and Horus Apollo gave a slave orders to take him into the kitchen and to see that the cook did everything in his power for him.

As soon as the two scholars were left alone, the old man said:

"That brave and bold old fellow that died yonder has made strange demands of you; it was plain from your expression while you were reading the tablet."

"There, take it!" rejoined the doctor, and again began to stride up and down the room, while the old man took up the tablet to read. Both sides were covered with irregular lines of writing, that moved in a wave motion up and down across the leaves of the tablet. The contents were the following:

"Rufinus in the presence of death—to his beloved Philippus:

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"One chill follows another. I shall certainly die to-day. Haste is necessary. Writing is difficult. If that which is necessary can only be said. In the first place: Johanna and my poor child. Be to them all that you can. I might have been more to them, and should have been. Protect them as guardian, curator and friend. They have enough to live on, and can even share with others. My brother Leonax manages my property, and he is honest. Johanna knows all. Tell her and my poor child that I send them a thousand blessings, and tell Johanna that I send her untold thanks for all the happiness she has given me. You, my friend, listen, listen to an old man! Free your heart from Paula. She is not for you. You know, the youthful Orion. But you. Those, who from their birth on have stood upon the highest point, seldom suit us, who have laboriously worked up from below to a nobler height. Be her friend. She deserves it, but that is enough. Do not remain single! The grandest thing that can fall to the lot of a man is brought into his life by his wife. In heavy sleep she twines kindly dreams. All that is to you still unknown. Your old friend, to whom I send cordial greetings, has denied himself this happiness his whole life. For you alone. These are the words of a dying man. Know, that poor child, our Pul, considers you the most perfect of all men, and esteems you as she does no other. You know her and Johanna. Bear witness of the fact that no wicked word has ever crossed the lips of either of them. Far is it from me to advise you, whose heart carries with it the image of another woman; woo this child, she is the woman that suits you. This for you both. I advise you, father and son, unite yourselves with mother and daughter as good and faithful companions and friends. None of you will ever regret it. This a dying man has spoken. It is done. You are the guardian of the women, Philippus, a faithful one, I know. Like aim, like thoughts, you and I, many happy years— Take good care of them both for me; take good care of them, I beg you."

The last words were isolated and were scattered outside of the lines over the tablet, and it was difficult for the old man to read them. As the doctor a short while before had done, so now the old man stared at the writing, embarrassed and undecided.

"Well?" inquired Philippus, at length.

"Yes, well?" rejoined Horus, shrugging his shoulders.

Then they both remained silent quite a long time, until the old man arose, and, supported upon his staff, commenced also

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to walk up and down the room, and in doing so began to murmur, half to Philippus and half to himself:

"Two quiet, sensible women; there are, I believe, only a few of this sort to be found. How sweetly the little girl helped me up from the low chair that time in the garden!"

With these words he tittered to himself, stopped Philippus, who was walking by him, and striking him gently upon the arm, he exclaimed, in a tone of sauciness quite foreign to him:

"A man ought to try everything. The tender care of woman, before descending into the grave! And is it true that neither of them scolds or tattles?"

"Of course not," replied the doctor.

"And what sort of a 'but' were you about to add?" said the old man. "Let us just for once be a little foolish, brother! If it were not such a devilish serious matter it would be ridiculous! In taking a rest, I'll take the little one, and you may have the old lady, my boy! Linen better washed, no holes in your clothes, no dust upon your books, every morning at the table an affectionate 'How are you?'— Just look at the fruit there on the plate! Like oats, that are thrown to a horse! In the old man's house it was all as nicely arranged as at our home in Philæ: the dessert a perfect work of art, a pleasure to the eye! Pul seems to understand such things like my poor deceased sister. And then, when you want to get up, such a kind little young hand to help you! Our house here has for a long time been an eye-sore to me! In our chamber plaster and dust are constantly falling from the ceiling, and here great cracks in the floor. I stumbled over them yesterday, and our niggardly landlord, the gentlemen of the city council, declare that if we wish to have any improvements made we must pay for them ourselves, as they haven't a penny to spend on such things. In the honorable old man's house everything was in the best condition." Here the old man tittered aloud, and rubbing his hands, continued: "And even if we do go a little too far, Philippus? If we fulfill the wish of the dying man? Great and gracious Isis! It would certainly be a good deed, and I can not boast of very many such. With prudence—what do you say?—at any rate we might make a trial of it, with mutual right to give a month's notice."

Then he became serious again, shook his head, and said, thoughtfully: "No, no; one's peace of mind would be utterly lost. A pretty dream, but it would be difficult to realize."

"Under no circumstances just now," rejoined the doctor. "As long as the fate of the lady of Damascus is not decided, I beg you to let all this rest."

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Then the old man uttered an oath, and exclaimed, with a sinister, piercing look:

"This patrician viper is everywhere; she ruins everything! I think she will soon be out of our way, and then— No, just at this time, at such a moment I shall not consent to our being robbed of that which might make our lives happy, which in the day of judgment of the dead might be of weight in the scales of justice in my behalf. The wish of a dying man is sacred. That our fathers used to say, and they were right. Let the will of the old man be done! Yes, yes, yes! The die is cast! As soon as this hinderance is put aside we shall keep house with these ladies. I wish it and have said so!"

Here the gardener entered again, and the old man called out to him:

"Listen, man; after all we shall meet again; the particulars later. Remain with my servants until dark; but you must guard your tongue; for they are one and all a set of eavesdroppers and prattlers. Master Philippus is going now to carry the sad news to the unfortunate widow, and you can talk with her to-night. Nothing unusual must be done down below here, and all that has happened to your master, even the fact that he is dead, must remain a secret for the whole world, except us and his family."

The gardener understood what depended upon his silence. Philippus consented to the old man's arrangement, but for the present avoided speaking about receiving the ladies. When he at length started upon his sad errand to the widow's house, Horus Apollo called after him:

"Courage, courage, my son, and in passing, glance into our little garden. It grieved us so to see the tall old palm-tree dying, and now there is springing up from its roots a beautiful, fresh-looking little sprout."

"Since yesterday its tip has been hanging down, and it will probably soon die," replied Philippus, shrugging his shoulders.

"Water it, Gibbus! The palm trunk must be watered at once!" exclaimed the old man.

"You have the water convenient," rejoined the doctor, and, when he had reached the steps, he added, in a tone of bitterness: "To whom may the same thing happen!"

"With patience and determination it will be accomplished!" murmured the old man, and as soon as he was alone, he growled ill-humoredly after him: "But away with the withered palm trunk, his old life, so far as it is associated with the patrician maiden! Cast it into the fire! How can I get at her? What must I do, how can I proceed?"

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With these words he threw himself into the arm-chair and commenced to rub his forehead with the tips of his fingers. He had not yet reached any conclusion, when a slave announced several visitors, who requested an audience. They were the chief men in the senate of Memphis, who had been sent to consult and take counsel with the wise old man. If any one could devise a plan of averting or of mitigating the frightful calamity that was threatening the city and the whole land, and against which prayers, sacrifices, processions and litanies had proven powerless, it would be he, and they were determined not to stop, even if they had to employ heathenish enchantments in gaining their end.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CATHARINE AND HELIODORA VISIT A SORCERESS.

During the moonless night that had just passed, Catharine had lost the last spark of sympathy she had ever felt for Heliodora. Attended by her maid and an old hostler slave, who was stone deaf, she had accompanied her to the house of one of the fortune-tellers in the city, of whom there were still as many in Memphis as sorcerers, alchemists and conjurers, and it had been foretold to the young woman that the line of her life would ascend to the greatest happiness, and that all her hopes, even the most ambitious her heart had devised, would be realized.

The little humming-bird was only too well aware what these hopes were, and the probability that they were approaching their fulfillment had aroused her anger, and taught her to hate Heliodora.

The latter had gone to the house of the enchantress in simple but costly clothes. Her *peplus* was held together on the shoulder, instead of by a golden clasp, by a button, that, in accordance with her passion for pretty jewels, consisted of a sapphire of unusual size, and this had at once attracted the eye of the fortune-teller, and showed her that she was dealing with a great and rich lady. Catharine, who was plainly dressed, she had mistaken for a companion or poorer friend of this distinguished lady, and had therefore prophesied for her the overcoming of certain obstacles and finally a happy life by the side of a husband who would be no longer a young man, and in addition a rich store of children.

The business of this woman must have been very remunerative, for the interior of her house stood in striking contrast with

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that of the miserable huts by which it was surrounded, in the poorest and most degraded quarter of the city. On the outside it differed little from its neighbors, ay, it had been studiously neglected, for the purpose of deceiving the authorities, who threatened enchantment and the exercise of magic arts with the punishment of death; but the outfit of the little unpretending auditorium, in which she was accustomed to transact her invocations and enchantments, must have cost no small sum. On its walls hung tapestries covered with magical figures, the columns were decorated with designs that were both astonishing and weird, on little altars were smoking, over grates of coals, crucibles and kettles of different sizes; basins, bottles, pitchers, a wheel, within which a wry-necked bird was hopping up and down, wax figures, and among them the representations of men and women with needles in their hearts, a cage full of bats and glasses full of spiders, frogs, leeches, beetles, scorpions, centipedes and other disgusting animals stood about on pedestals, and along one side of the room extended a rope-yard, which was employed in the execution of Thracian enchantment. Sweet-smelling and pungent vapors filled the room, and from behind a curtain, which concealed the performers from view, could be heard the monotonous sound of children's voices, the ringing of bells and the weird beating of drums.

The sorceress Medea, although she had scarcely passed her forty-fifth year, suited quite well this place, which was so rich in strange objects that awakened disgust, fear, and stupefaction, for her face was pale, and its unusual length was increased by a bunch of curls that were coal-black, and combed high upon the top of her head.

At the close of the first visit of the ladies, which had been a complete surprise to her, and at which many things upon the sorceress's stage had been wanting that proved to-day to be especially effective, she had induced Heliodora to repeat her visit in three days, and the young woman had made no opposition and appeared at the appointed time accompanied by Catharine.

One could not leave Egypt, the land of enchantment and of the magical arts, without having put them to the test. Martina also gave her consent, although she was not fond of such things herself. She was satisfied with her lot, and if changes to her disadvantage were to confront her she did not desire to be made uneasy about them beforehand by the declarations of an enchantress who was worthy of belief, nor to be deceived by one who was not. She could no longer enjoy to any great ex-

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tent unusual good fortune; it would only have disturbed her. But young people whose lives still lay before them, if they desired to glance into the future, she was the last person to censure them for it.

The young widow and the little girl crossed the threshold of the enchantress in quite a state of excitement, and to-day Catharine was the more excited of the two; for in the afternoon she had seen Philippus leave Rufinus's house, and shortly afterward Arabian officials enter.

Just before sundown Paula had appeared in the garden with eyes red from weeping, and when a few moments later Pul and her mother joined her, Paula had thrown her arms around Johanna's neck and had wept so bitterly that both she and her daughter, who was very easily moved to tears, began to sob with her from sheer sympathy. Something very important must have happened; but when she went over to learn the particulars, old Betta, who had never been very fond of her, was very short with her, and even impolite.

Something very distressing also had happened to Heliodora and herself upon the street, for the carriage of Lady Nephoris, which was to deposit them at the limits of the grave-yard, had been held up by a detachment of Arabian cavalry, and she was compelled to submit to certain interrogatories by their commander.

And so they entered to-day the house of "Medea with the Curls," as the enchantress was popularly called, with anxiously beating hearts, but they were received with such humble politeness that they soon felt perfectly at ease, and even the extremely uneasy Heliodora began to breathe more easily.

The sorceress now knew also who Catharine was, and bestowed more consideration upon the only daughter of the wealthy widow Susannah.

The narrow crescent of the new moon was now visible in the heavens, a fact that Medea declared enabled her to see more clearly than during the season of the *Puna negro*, as she called a night when there was no moonlight. Her mind's eye at their first visit had been seized by typhonian darkness under the influence of hostile powers. She had perceived it immediately after their departure; but to-day she could see all the more clearly. Her inner eye was as unclouded as a silver mirror—she had purified it by a fast of three days—and with the help of the children of Horus, Hapi and the three other holy ones —not one atom of dust could escape her.

"Oh, ye happy ones, ye lovely ones!" she continued in a tone of enthusiasm. "Hundreds of great ladies have tested

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my art, but never yet have I seen fate so favorable to any as to you. Do you hear how the kettles of fortune are boiling? The very lids are rising. Unheard of! most wonderful!"

With these words she extended her hands toward the vessels as though she were muttering an imprecation, and exclaimed, with grave solemnity:

"Superabundance of joy, abundance and superabundance, bursting magazines, Zefa—u, Metramao— Return to the right surface, right height, right depth, right measure! Thy yard Mei—measurer, weigher, use them, Techuti, use them, double Ibis!"

Then she ordered them both to sit down upon the beautifully ornamented stools opposite the kettles, tied around their ring-fingers the "Anubian thread," and asked each of them in a whisper, and amid words of imprecation, for a hair, and after she had laid each in one of the kettles, she cried out in passionate zeal, and as though the fates for weal or woe of her visitors depended upon the slightest delay:

"Press the finger with the Anubian thread upon it on your hearts, fix your eyes upon the kettles and the vapor that is ascending up to the spirits of the heights beyond, of the light, to the great ones on high!"

The ladies, with throbbing hearts, obeyed the command of the enchantress, and she suddenly commenced to turn rapidly around upon her toes, and in doing so her bunch of curls flew up and the wand of enchantment that she held in her far-outstretched hand described a large and magnificent circle. As though seized by a horrible terror she then suddenly stopped her whirling, and at the same moment the lamps were extinguished, and nothing illuminated the room but the stars of heaven and the glowing coals under the kettles. The weird music ceased gradually, but a fresh strong odor forced its way through the curtain into the room.

Then Medea threw herself upon her knees, stretched out her arms toward heaven, and by a sudden motion, that none but her could have executed, threw her head back so far that her whole face was turned toward the firmament, and the glance of her eyes, peering straight upward, touched the very stars themselves. In this frightful position she began to sing to the zenith of the blue vault of heaven above her head imprecation after imprecation in a clear, passionate voice. Her bosom was distended, her bunch of curls no longer stood upright, but fell over toward the ladies. The latter thought every moment that this woman, who was uttering her prayers toward the firmament, must become overpowered by the rush of blood to her

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head and would fall backward on the floor, but she sung and sung, and her white teeth glittered in the light of the stars that shot their rays perpendicularly down upon her, and amid this flood of demoniacal names and magical words there rang forth from behind the curtain a heart-rending and lamentable mixture of sounds, of gurgling, sighing, and complaining; the one as though it issued from the breast of a man in agony, the other like the gentle, half-choked sobs of a child in pain. And now the latter became louder, and there burst forth, in the Egyptian tongue:

"Water! one taste of water!"

Thereupon the woman arose from her terrible position and exclaimed:

"The lament of the plundered and destitute, from whom was taken their all to bestow upon those who had an abundance; the cry of the destitute, whom fate has plundered in order to shower upon you gifts enough for hundreds."

With these words, which were spoken with much pathos in the Greek tongue, she turned toward the curtain, and again exclaimed, with great solemnity, in the Egyptian language:

"Give ye to him that thirsts wherewithal to drink; those whom fortune has blessed will grant him out of their abundance a drop. Give ye the white potion to the lamenting child-demon in order that he may be comforted and disappear. Let the music sound forth, let the complaints of the lamenting spirits be drowned with sound."

Thereupon she turned toward Heliodora's kettle and said, seriously, as if she were obeying a higher command:

"Seven pieces of gold to complete the work;" and while the young woman opened her purse and handed her the coins, and the sorceress lighted the lamps and cast the money into the boiling liquid, she continued to sing, without interruption:

"Pure, glistening gold; sunlight buried in the bosom of the mountains. Holy seven—schaschef, schaschef! Holy seven! Unite in holy wedlock! Melt and flow together!"

Thereupon she poured out of the kettle into a flat vessel a smoking liquid as black as ink, called Heliodora to her side, and declared to her what her eye beheld upon the mirror-like surface.

It was a revelation of good fortune; it gave the most heart-inspiring answers to the widow's questions. And what the sorceress said could only increase her confidence in the woman's magical arts; for she described Orion as accurately as if she saw him in the black mirror before her, on a journey in company with an elderly gentleman. But then she saw in the

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shining surface already his return home and Heliodora leaning on the bosom of her beloved; and now—what a picture! not the Bishop of Memphis; no, a stranger in a large, magnificent cathedral was laying their hands in each other before the altar and blessing their union.

Catharine, whom the song of Medea and what had followed it had filled with apprehension and horror, followed every word of the enchantress with anxious attention. What she said; the way in which she described Orion was more wonderful than anything she had ever conceived of. And the cathedral in which the loving pair was to be married was the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople, about which she had heard so much.

Her heart almost burst; but though she listened so attentively to the words of Medea, she nevertheless constantly detected with her sharp ears those sad gurgling sounds of lamentation behind the curtain, and it made her apprehensive, and her heart almost stopped beating. A deep, torturing feeling of misfortune took possession of her. She, above all others, had not robbed, it was certain, that whimpering child's ghost, some portion of whose happiness it was said had fallen to her lot; for who could be more miserable than she? It was only that beautiful, languishing young woman there whom Fate had so extravagantly blessed with gifts sufficient for countless others. Oh, if she could only tear from her one after the other of them, from the large ruby, which she wore to-day, to the love of Orion!

Pale and excited she obeyed the command of the sorceress after she too had sacrificed seven pieces of gold. It would have been far preferable to her to have purchased a murderous curse from the woman, and with it to have withered her happy companion.

The raven-black liquid commenced to flow into the shallow vessel, and a pungent-smelling vapor arose from it; the sorceress blew it aside, however, and as soon as the black liquid had cooled a little, and the mirror-like surface appeared lustrous and untarnished, Medea inquired of the young girl what she would like to learn first. But Catharine's answer was cut short: a terrific thundering and rattling shook the house suddenly, and with a shrill, loud cry the sorceress let the vessel fall, and its contents splattered about, and warm, loathsome drops fell upon the clothes and the arms of the young girl. A frightful, sudden terror caused a shudder to pass through her whole body; and Heliodora, who was scarcely able to control

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herself, had to support her, for she staggered and threatened to fall.

The enchantress had disappeared; but soon a half-grown boy, a young man, and a long, lank, scantily clothed Egyptian girl rushed through the room.

Hastening hither and thither they cast all the utensils that were standing around into an opening in the floor, from which they had drawn back a trap-door, poured water upon the coals, put out the lamps, and drove the ladies with coarse, rough words into a corner of the room. Then the men, as active as cats, clambered up to the open ceiling and were soon at liberty. And now there rang through the house a shrill whistle, and a few moments later the enchantress rushed into the room, seized the trembling ladies by the shoulders, and exclaimed:

"For Christ's sake, have mercy! My life is in danger. Enchantment is punished by death. I have done my best for you. You came—do you hear what you must say?—you came hither out of mercy to attend the sick."

With this she shoved them both behind the curtain, whence were still heard sounds of complaint, into a gloomy, low-pitched room, and the tall thin girl followed them precipitately. There upon two miserable beds lay an old man with dark spots upon his breast and face, and a five-year-old child, whose crimson cheeks glowed with a feverish heat.

Heliodora thought she must necessarily suffocate in the pestiferous, sultry heat of this room; and Catharine clung to her trembling; but the sorceress pulled them apart and exclaimed:

"Each one to a bed! You to the child, you to the old man!"

Involuntarily they both obeyed the woman, who was gasping from anxiety. The little humming-bird, who had never yet had occasion to trouble herself about a sick person, was overcome by a feeling of disgust, and turned her eyes away from the suffering man; the young widow, who had watched many, many nights by the bed of a beloved person, and kind-hearted as she was, had often with her own hands lent aid to her suffering slaves, glanced sympathetically into the pretty, burning face of the child, and wiped the perspiration from its streaming brow with a cloth.

Catharine shuddered at this sight; but her attention had already been attracted by something new; for from the other side of the house the clash of arms resounded, the door was forced open, and Dr. Philippus entered. He commanded the detachment of the city guards that had accompanied him to

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wait for him on the outside. He had come by order of the aldermen, who had been informed that certain persons who had been seized with the plague were at the house of "Medea with the Curls," and that she nevertheless continued to receive visitors.

It had long ago been decided to put an end to her trade; and to-day notice had been received that she expected that evening distinguished visitors. The officers were to take her in the act; the doctor was to determine whether the house was one of the infected ones, and in any event the senate desired to have the sorceress thrown into prison and to know that she was at their disposal, although Philippus had no knowledge of such an intention.

Least of all had he expected to find such guests in this place. He glanced at them with a disapproving shake of the head, and abruptly cut short the asseveration of the sorceress that these noble ladies had come out of Christian mercy to bring aid and comfort to the unfortunate sufferers, with a gruff: "That remains to be seen!" and without a moment's delay conducted the involuntary nurses into the open air. There he represented to them into what frightful danger their frivolity had led them, and ordered them peremptorily to go home immediately, and in spite of the late hour of the night to have a bath prepared and to change their clothes. With trembling knees they reached the carriage; and before it had even started Heliodora broke out into bitter tears, while Catharine threw herself ill-naturedly back upon the cushions, and, with a glance at her heart-broken companion, thought:

"The beginning of that huge good fortune which was foretold her? 'Tis well, if it will only continue thus!"

And it seemed as though friendly demons had heard the wish of the little humming-bird; for as the carriage was about to pass the little guard-house and enter the first court of the governor's mansion, it was stopped by strange soldiers with brown, war-like countenances, and they were forced to wait here some minutes until an Arabian officer appeared and demanded who they were and what they desired.

Trembling, they answered; and now it was disclosed to them that the governor's mansion had just been seized in the name of the Arabian Government.

Orion was accused of a grave crime; and his guests had been compelled to leave the house. Catharine, whom the interpreter knew, was permitted to accompany Heliodora to the senator's wife, to drive home in the carriage, and, if she so desired it, to take Heliodora home with her; for there would

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be warlike movements in the governor's palace during the next few days.

And now the two took counsel together. The humming-bird insisted upon Heliodora's accompanying her immediately to her mother's house; for she considered that they were infected with the plague, and how could Heliodora manage to take a bath in a house that was beset with soldiers? The young widow could not and ought not to remain at Martina's house in such a condition. The senator's wife also must come to their house to-morrow. Her mother, she declared, would be greatly charmed to have such distinguished guests.

The young widow consented without an effort at opposition, and after Martina had agreed to accept the invitation of her "guardian angel," they drove to the house of the widow Susannah. She had long since retired, and was firmly convinced that her little daughter was in her pretty chamber slumbering and dreaming.

Catharine would not allow her to be disturbed, and the bath-room lay so far from Susannah's room that she continued to sleep quietly while her child and her new guest made use of it.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MOMENTOUS EVENTS TAKE PLACE IN THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION.

It was a terrible night in the governor's mansion. Mme. Martina asked herself what sins she had committed, that she of all others should have been selected to be a witness of such misfortunes.

And what was to become of all her matrimonial schemes.

A change of quarters was certainly hard to bear during such heat; but she would have willingly moved a dozen times from one set of apartments to another, and would have allowed herself to be thrown hither and thither like a ball, if by that means it would have saved her dear "great Sesostris" from such terrible danger.

Of course that crazy, mad adventure with the nuns was the cause of it all! And these Arabs!

They lay hands upon exactly what pleases them, and are in a position, beyond a doubt, to plunder and reduce to poverty the son of the great Mukaukas. A pretty state of affairs! If the worst should come to the worst, Heliodora would have enough for both, and she, herself, and her husband, need not

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omit them in their will; but it might, in this case, be a question of life and death.

A cold shudder ran over her at this thought, and her apprehension was not without foundation; the black Arab, who had come to her for the purpose of consulting with her, and finally of permitting her to remain until morning in the governor's mansion, had in fact informed her to that effect through the interpreter. An unheard of, terrific, indescribable catastrophe! And she there in the midst of it all, compelled to live through it!

And her husband, her poor Justinus! How deeply it would all affect him! Her eyes became a fountain of tears, and before she fell asleep she prayed quite fervently that her blessed saint and the holy mother of God would bring it all to a happy issue. With the thought: "What a misfortune!" she closed her eyes, and she awoke early in the morning with the same thought. However, she had not yet learned what a terrible thing had happened during the night.

A troop of Arabian soldiers had, at the approach of night, crossed the Nile, some on foot, some mounted, and others in boats, and had, under the leadership of Wekil Obada, surrounded the governor's mansion.

After it had been definitely ascertained that Orion was really absent upon a journey, Nilus, the secretary of the treasury, was taken prisoner. Thereupon it became the duty of the Arab to inform the widow of the Mukaukas of what had taken place, and to instruct her to leave the house promptly on the following morning. This was rendered necessary by the fact that he proposed to proceed in an exceptional manner with the honorable seat of the oldest family in the land.

Lady Nephoris was still awake, and was seated in the fountain-chamber, when the interpreter, as the precursor of Obada, was announced. He found her in quite a state of excitement, for although she was no longer capable of thinking in a consecutive and logical manner, and, when her mind was called into action, ideas shot through her brain like flashes of lightning, she had nevertheless noticed to-day that something unusual was going on in the governor's mansion; but both the chief-steward Sebek and her maids had evasively answered her questions, and had only replied that the representative of Amr had come to talk with the young master. It seemed to be something important, perhaps some false accusation.

The interpreter reported that Orion had been accused of having been the instigator of an undertaking that had cost the lives of twelve Arabian warriors, and an attack by an

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Egyptian upon even one Mussulman, as she well knew, was punished by death and the confiscation of property. And further, her son had been accused of theft.

At the end of his statement, to which Nephoris had listened with staring eyes, terrified, and finally as though she had been annihilated, the interpreter requested an audience for Wekil.

"Not quite yet; a few moments later," was the widow's answer, uttered with the greatest difficulty; for she must first strengthen herself by the enjoyment of her *arcanum*. As soon as she had done so she expressed herself as ready to receive Obada.

The black enemy of her son desired to appear to her as a mild and magnanimous man, and disclosed to her, with flattering humility and frequent displays of his white teeth, that she must leave in the course of the next day the house in which she had spent the longest and happiest term of her life.

In reply to his statement that her own property should remain untouched, and that she was at liberty to remain in Memphis, or to repair to her home in Alexandria, she calmly said:

"We shall see about that."

Then she inquired whether her son was in the power of the Arabians.

"Not exactly," rejoined Wekil; "but we know where he is, and by to-morrow or the next day we shall have the culpable young man."

At the last words the widow observed a vicious glance of joy in his eyes, which up to that time had in vain attempted to look sympathetic, and with a slight motion of her head, she continued:

"It is, therefore, a question of life or death for him?"

"Be composed, noble madame," he replied. "Only a question of death."

Then she cast her eyes up toward heaven, and kept them thus fixed for some time, and then again asked:

"And who has accused him of theft?"

"The head of his own Church—"

"Benjamin," she murmured to herself softly, and her mouth assumed a strange smile. She had yesterday drawn her will in favor of the patriarch and the Church. "If Benjamin had read it," she thought to herself, "he would perhaps change his feelings toward me and my family, and would have urgent prayers offered for us."

As she said nothing more, Wekil looked at her inquisitively, and in some embarrassment, until at length she arose and made

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a sign to him in the most dignified manner, and with the remark that matters of business had been arranged, and that she had nothing further to say.

With this the interview came to an end, and when the fountain-room lay behind Wekil, he murmured to himself:

"This woman! She is either possessed with devils and is loose in the upper story, or she is an extraordinary heroine!"

Nephoris was conducted to her chamber, and after she had retired, she ordered her maid to fetch her a little writing-case out of her trunk, and place it upon the little physic-table at the head of her bed.

As soon as she was alone she took from the case two letters that the Mukaukas had written to her while they were engaged, and a poem that Orion had once addressed to her, and attempted to read them, but her eyes became so dazed that she had to lay the sheets aside. She then took up the little package that contained locks of hair, which she had cut from the lifeless heads of her deceased sons and husband. She gazed with ineffable tenderness at these precious souvenirs, and soon the opium began to take effect. The faces of the dead loved ones presented themselves before her mind's eye with tangible distinctness, and she communed with them as though they were standing beside her bed in the full glow of life. With the locks in her hand she turned her eyes upward and attempted to realize all that had happened to-day and what now awaited her in the future. It meant that she must leave this room, this capacious couch, this house, all with which her most precious recollections of those whom she loved were connected. They wanted to compel her—but was it proper for her to submit to the commands of this negro, this foreigner, in a place where she was mistress? With a smile of contempt she shook her head, and opened a little glass bottle which was still half full of little spherules. She then placed several upon her tongue, and again turned her eyes upward. And soon a new face arose before her mind's eye, and she saw Him from whom even death could not separate her, and her deceased sons at His feet. Then there appeared before her, like a diver from beneath the waves of the stream, the form of Orion, emerging from the clouds, and he swung himself upon the bank of the island upon which her husband and other sons were standing. His father opened his arms and drew him to his bosom, and she herself—or was it only her likeness—approached the others, and both hastened toward her with looks of tenderness, and at last her husband, too, and she reposed upon his breast; and though she had for hours and long before the surprise by the

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Arabs felt half stupefied and, so to speak, befogged, she now felt a sweet drowsiness that rendered her limbs powerless, and to which she felt she must surrender her whole being. But when she was on the point of closing her eyes, again there shot through her mind all that lay before her, and by the exercise of her whole will-power she aroused herself and took the water that always stood close at hand upon her little table, and the rest of the opium pills that the little phial contained, mixed them together, and prepared to drink the potion to its dregs.

Her hand was perfectly steady, and one might easily have inferred from the contented smile that played around her mouth and the longing expression of her eyes that she was thirsty and was preparing for herself an agreeable drink. She looked very little like one who in despair was about to lay violent hands upon herself, and she experienced neither apprehension nor fear of death, nor the burden of guilt that she was taking upon herself, but only a sweet lassitude and comforting hope of an existence without end, united with those whom she loved.

But scarcely had she taken the deadly draught, when a cold shudder shook her whole frame. She raised herself half up and called her maid, who was watching in the next room, and when she looked in her glassy eyes with an anxious expression, Nephoris stammered out to her:

"A priest, quick—I am dying!"

The maid rushed out and told the chief steward Sebek who was standing in front of the *tablinum* conversing with Wekil what had happened, and the negro permitted him to comply with his mistress's request, and conducted him to the gate in person. Right in front of the gate the chief steward met a priest, who had just administered the last blessing of the church to one whom the plague had hurried into eternity, and a few moments later they were standing by the bed of the widow.

At her side lay the locks of her sons' hair, her hands were folded around a crucifix, but her eyes, which had been long fixed upon the Saviour's face, were once more directed upward. She called the priest by name, but she mistook him for her son, and spoke to him in terms of maternal tenderness:

"Orion, poor, poor child! And you, Maria, my little heart, my precious little treasure! Your father—yes, precious boy—your father; come here; he isn't angry any longer and has forgiven you. All whom I have loved are again assembled together, and there is no one who can separate us again. Do you know, dear husband? Listen, George—"

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The priest then commenced the duties of his office, but she, without observing him, continued to stare upward, and in doing so her smiling lips continued constantly to move; but they were no longer able to articulate definite sounds. At length they came to rest, the pupils of her eyes disappeared beneath the lids, her hands released their grasp upon the crucifix, her limbs trembled slightly, gradually to assume their full length, and her mouth opened, as if she were going to draw a long breath. But it did not close again, and when the faithful steward closed her lips, her countenance had already become motionless, and her heart had ceased to beat.

The faithful man sobbed aloud, and when he carried the sad news to Wekil, he uttered an oath and called to the subordinate officer at his side, who was superintending the loading of some camels with the treasures of the *tablinum*, in a tone of sullen rage: "I intended to show the crazy old woman all kinds of magnanimous consideration, and now she has played me this trick, and the authorities at Medina will lay the blame of this also at my door, if not—"

Here he suddenly stopped, and while he again turned his attention to the camels and their burdens, he thought: "In a game where the stakes are so large a few gold pieces more or less will make no great difference. A few more heads must be severed from their trunks, and first of all that of the handsome young Egyptian. If the conspirators in Medina only do their duty! The fall of Omar will carry with it that of Amr also, and then all this will be a matter of indifference!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MANDANE AND HASSAN BECOME FRIENDS.

CATHARINE had slept very little, and according to her custom had arisen early, while Heliodora preferred to sleep through the early morning hours. These at such a hot season were of course the most agreeable part of the day, and "the little humming-bird" at any other time would have enjoyed them heartily, but although a large Indian flower had during the last night bloomed for the first time, and the chief gardener had pointed it out to her with pride, she could feel no pleasure nor interest in it. It might wither away, and with it the whole world!

In her neighbor's garden there was no sign of motion yet, but tall Dr. Philippus was approaching along the street to

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pay the ladies next door a visit. With nimble steps she hastened to the gate and accosted the doctor.

She must request him not to mention the fact that he had seen her yesterday, and he stopped at once and told her, before she had found time to disclose her wish to him, that the widow of the Mukaukas had, during the last night, overcome by fright and despair, followed her husband. There was a time when the little humming-bird had been as attached to Nephoris as to a second mother, when the governor's mansion seemed to her the embodiment of all that was great, honorable and distinguished, and when she had been proud and happy at being allowed to go in and out there without restraint, at being loved there like a child of the house, and so the tears that filled her eyes at hearing this news were not forced, and it relieved her to be able to lay aside her joyous and happy expression, which she had been wearing as a mask, since it looked so dark, wild and miserable within her soul.

The doctor understood her grief, promised her willingly to tell no one what he had seen, did not censure her, but again represented to her the great danger to which she had exposed herself, and reminded her urgently to have every piece of clothing that she and Heliodora had worn yesterday destroyed, for the fine little particles of infectious matter adhered to everything, and every piece of clothing was especially adapted to transmitting to others and to spreading abroad the pestiferous poison.

She listened to him anxiously, and was able to assure him at last that everything she and the young widow had worn had been thrown into the fire.

The doctor hastened on, but she paid no attention to the ever-increasing heat, and continued to wander around among the walks in the garden. Her heart was beating in short, quick, painful throbs, an invisible burden was oppressing her, and prevented her from breathing freely. And then a series of tormenting thoughts arose unbidden before her would not be put down, and increased her feeling of wretchedness.

Nephoris dead, the governor's mansion in the hands of Arabs, Orion robbed of his possessions and on trial for his life.

And that quiet house over there behind the hedge! What was in store for him, its silver-haired master, and his innocent wife and daughter? A storm was hanging over their heads too; she saw it approaching, and in its wake a fresh, brown death-bringing cloud of the plague, the fearful plague. And she—she, this little weak girl, had conjured up all these calamities—she it was that had opened the flood-gates from

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which destruction and ruin now began to pour forth on every side! She saw the flood increase and rise higher and higher, saw it ravenously overflow her own house and lap around her own feet, and she became so terrified at it that cold perspiration moistened her hands and her brow when she thought of it. But yet, yet! If she had really had the power to drive back these disasters into the clouds and these floods back into their channels, she would have forborne to do so. The last thing that she desired, that she longed to see spring up and unfold itself as the fruit of the seed which she had sown, this had not yet come to pass, and to live to see that was worth enduring a great deal for, and even relinquishing, if it became necessary, this false, hot and unattractive world.

Death was hanging over Orion's head, but before it should fall upon him he must know who had sharpened the executioner's sword. He might possibly get off with his life, but an Arab rarely releases what he once has in his possession, and were the young and brilliant Crœsus really to begin life again as a beggar released from prison, then, then— But Paula! and Heliodora! Her little hand had wrested from the Eagle of Zeus already one bundle of lightning, and she would find a bolt for these two also!

The consciousness of her terrible power, to which already sacrifice after sacrifice had fallen, intoxicated her. She wished, wished to see Orion, wished to see him who had deceived her, had plunged her into misery and ruin, groveling as a beggar at her feet, and it was this that gave her strength to attempt even the most extreme things; this, only this! And what she would then like to do; she herself did not yet care to know; that lay still in the lap of the future, and it might perhaps turn out mercifully and gloriously for her.

When she returned into the house all her anxiety and depression had left her, fresh impulses had taken possession of her soul, and out of the little eavesdropper and tale-bearer there had, in this one hour, sprung up a cunning and terrible woman, who was ready for the perpetration of any crime.

"Poor little lamb!" thought Dr. Philippus, as he entered Rufinus's garden; "upon her little heart too that miserable man has inflicted sorrows enough."

The garden of his old friend was empty. Only beneath the sycamore two people were sitting; the gigantic figure of a young man and a beautiful, tender, rather pale, fair-haired girl. The large, well-developed man was holding between his powerful hands a broad skein of yarn, and the young girl at his side was winding it into a ball. It was the Masdakite Has-

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san and the lovely Mandana, both of whom had recovered from their wounds, and the Persian girl had awakened to a new, peaceful, and mentally vigorous life.

Philippus had followed this remarkable recovery with the deepest interest and sympathy. He ascribed it chiefly to the great loss of blood from her head, but also to the fresh air and careful attendance she had enjoyed. It was now only necessary to protect her further from all disturbance and unusual mental excitement. She had found a friend and an obedient admirer in the Masdakite, and the sight of these two persons, in the case of whom his art had for once no cause to be ashamed, gratified Philippus extremely.

The greeting which he gave them sounded unusually good-natured and cordial, and in reply to Philippus's "How do you do?" the Masdakite answered with a joyous: "Like a fish in the water!" and pointing to Mandana, he said: "And my fellow countrywoman likewise."

"Is it all arranged?" inquired Philippus, and she assented with a vigorous nod of her head. Thereupon Philippus shook his finger at the Persian and said: "Mind, my friend, that you do not tie yourself down here so that you can not get away. Who knows how soon Haschim might call you away!"

So saying, he turned his back upon the convalescent pair and murmured to himself: "For once something refreshing amid all this misery; she and little Maria!"

Rufinus, before his departure, had sent back to their parents all the deformed children whom he had gathered around him, and consequently the doctor found no one in the front hall.

The ladies might perhaps be in the dining-room at an early breakfast! But he was mistaken, for breakfast was to be served later, and Pulcheria was still busy arranging the table.

She did not observe the doctor enter, so busy was she in arranging the grapes and pomegranates, figs, and a fruit that in taste resembled mulberries, and which grew in bunches out of the trunk of the sycamore, carefully between leaves, that had been parched by the intense heat of the last few weeks. This pretty structure was already assuming the shape of a neat sphere composed of many members, but her thoughts were not entirely engrossed with her work, for tears were falling copiously down her cheeks.

"They are in memory of her father," thought Philippus, as he looked at her from the door. "Poor child!" How often he had heard his friend call her by that name! And to him she had been a child until to-day, but now he must look at her

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with different eyes since her own father had so desired it; and in fact he stood before her now as if in the presence of a miracle. What had become of little Pul?

How was it that he had never noticed it before to-day? There stood before him a magnificently developed woman with round, snow-white arms, and he could have sworn just now that she had nothing but the slender little arms of a child, which she had so often thrown around his neck, while riding up and down the garden in his arms, calling him her "splendid racer."

How long ago was it?

Ten years!

She is now seventeen years old!

And how tender, slight and fair her hands had become, on account of which her mother had so often scolded her when she built sand-houses and would come and take her seat at the table immediately afterward.

As she was laying some grapes in graceful symmetry around the pomegranates, he suddenly saw the justice of the compliment his old friend had paid her cleverness yesterday. The curtains were drawn, but in spite of this a few rays of sunlight found their way into the room, and fell upon her bright, golden locks. Such beautifully colored hair had not even been possessed by those fair blonde daughters of Bœotia, whom, while a student at Athens, he had visited and admired in their native country. He had always known that she had a pretty face, but when she raised her eyes and observed that he was there, and her glance met his with such maidenly modesty, such charming surprise, then he felt that he was blushing, and he had first to collect himself in order to reply to her salutation with something better than a mere counter-greeting. And with what a weighty sentence did the remark begin which he had been making up during this pause!

"Yes, here I am," were the exact words he said, and they truly did not deserve the cordial answer they received: "Thank God that you have come!" and the explanation, that was added with such charming embarrassment: "For mother's sake!"

He blushed, the man who for long years had known nothing of youthful embarrassment, for the second time, and inquired after Johanna's health and how she bore her sorrow, and finally he said in a tone of seriousness:

"What terrible news I brought you yesterday, and now again to-day I flutter into your house like a bird of ill-omen."

"You?" she said, with a smile of incredulity, and in this little word there lay such a sincere doubt of his capability of

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bearing ill news that he was forced to acknowledge to himself that his friend had left him in this child, in this young woman, the most precious legacy that one dying man could bestow upon another a true, trusting, innocent daughter—no, a little sister so pure, so attractive and lovable, such as only the child of such parents could be. And while he narrated to her what had taken place in the governor's mansion, and observed how it went to her heart, the sad news of the death of the woman whose relations to her had been only of the most distant character, and this on account of Paula and little Maria, he determined to acquaint Pulcheria's mother at once with the wish of her deceased husband.

But all this did not drive into the shade his old feelings for Paula; no, they tortured him to-day as severely and with as painful a sting as ever; but he felt withal that she had proved a curse to him, that he only injured himself by such feelings, and that he was only insulting himself, since they were not reciprocated. He knew that he could never find peace so long as he was near the lady of Damascus, that if he was condemned to live close to her he would suffer unceasing tortures. He could only again become a contented, happy man far from her, and under the same roof as Johanna and her daughter, but he did not dare to give expression to this thought yet.

Pulcheria noticed that he was keeping back something from her, and began to fear that he had learned of something new that was threatening them, but he was able to drive off this apprehension by assuring her that, on the contrary, he had something in his mind that to him at least seemed a cause for joy; but her troubled and apprehensive heart could scarcely believe that, and he begged her not to lose all hopes of better days, and asked her if she had a truly firm and friendly confidence in him.

Thereupon she exclaimed in a tone of joy that he ought to feel that, and while Johanna and the others entered the room and she bowed to her mother, whom she had already kissed good-morning, she extended her hand to him and seized his and shook it heartily.

Those were refreshing moments to him, but the sight of Paula and the thought of what he had to tell her led him back into the old, depressed and unfortunate frame of mind.

Little Maria, whose cheeks had again become rosy, and who had once more commenced to look well, threw herself sobbing upon Paula's neck when she heard the sad news he had brought; Paula was more quiet and composed than he had expected. True, she had at first turned ashy pale, but she soon

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controlled herself and quietly listened, and finally resumed her stately carriage.

Philippus was forced in looking at her to put his heart in durance, and as soon as it was consistent with propriety he withdrew.

It seemed that it was necessary that it should be impressed upon him once more, plainly and painfully, what he was losing in her, for she passed before him as though she were borne by a lofty consciousness and a dreamy glimmer, but to her noble face an enchanting attraction, that caused him as much pain as it did a feeling of rapture.

Orion a prisoner robbed of his possessions!

This thought had terrified her only for a brief interval; then it seemed to her as if it was all as it should be, and that what at first glance had appeared to be a frightful misfortune had been brought upon her in order to release his love from its restraints, to expose it in its fullness and purity, and to give it by the help of God the proper consecration.

She had no fears for his life, for he had told her and had written to her with what paternal kindness Amr, the commander-in-chief, had treated him, and all this that had happened was doubtless only a high-handed act of Wekil, of whose wicked and malicious character he had drawn her a repulsive picture, while Rufinus was warning the abbess. When his friend's house lay behind Philippus he began to breathe more freely. How was it that he found these ladies so different from what he had expected?

His old friend was familiar with human nature!

From slight indications the old man had succeeded in drawing a more correct picture of Pulcheria than he had formed during long years of familiar intercourse with her.

The old man had also foreseen that the dangers which threatened the governor's son would fan Paula's feelings like a pleasant breeze, and Johanna, the tender, weak Johanna, bore heroically the loss of him for whom she had lived so many years in true devotion. He could not help comparing her with the unfortunate Nephoris, and what was it that enabled the former to bear her loss so much more nobly than the latter?

Merely the tender heart of her Pulcheria, who bore with her her sorrow so beautifully and quietly, who shared it so willingly and sensibly. Such a one the widow of the Mukaukas had not had, and happy he who can call such a heart his own!

With head bowed down, he strode through the garden, this time looking neither to the right nor left.

The Masdakite, who was still sitting with Mandana under

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the sycamore-tree, and was as little disturbed as she by the ever-increasing heat of the sun, followed him with his eyes, pointed at him, and sighed:

"There he goes! 'tis the first time that he ever spoke a cross word to either you or me; or perhaps you didn't understand him?"

"Oh, yes I did," she said, mildly, and kept her eyes upon her embroidery.

They spoke the Persian language together, for she had not forgotten this language, as her mother had spoken it with her till the day of her death. Sometimes life is the most wonderful romance, and one might call it almost a miraculous play of fate that had brought these two together in the same sick-chamber, for his far-off fatherland was her fatherland too, and he even had known her uncle, the brother of her father, and the sad history of the latter. When the Greek army took possession of the region of country where he lived, the men had fled with their herds into the forests, their wives and children into the fortification, which commanded the highway. This fortification had resisted the Byzantine soldiers only a short while, and the women, Mandana and her mother being among the number, were bestowed upon the soldiers as valuable booty of war. Her father had then gathered around him an armed band of men for the purpose of setting the women at liberty, but together with all his companions had lost his life. The people of the neighborhood still spoke of the sad end of the brave man, and now the plantation and the beautiful meadows belonged to his younger brother. And so from the beginning the convalescent patients had a great deal to talk to each other about, and it was remarkable how accurately Mandana remembered many experiences of her early childhood.

Her head had been laid upon the pillows of her sick couch with her brain completely clouded, but as a storm often purifies the suffocating atmosphere of an oppressive summer's day, so this new illness had drawn the veil from her befogged mind. Her thoughts lingered with pleasure about the time of her childhood, when she still had a mother, and in the present, but the period that lay between had to her the appearance of the sky upon a dark night, black, but illuminated by one fearful comet and luminous star. This comet was Orion. All that she had enjoyed with him and suffered through him she referred to the period of her insanity, she had accustomed herself to count it among the mad vagaries with which she had been attacked. Her heart was not made to hate, and she would

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and could not be inimicably disposed toward the son of the governor. She always thought of him as one who had inflicted upon her an atrocious cruelty without any malicious intent, and about whom she could not even dare to think without exposing herself to great danger.

"That means, then," said the Masdakite, resuming the conversation, "that even to you it is not altogether a matter of indifference when Haschim shall summon me to him?"

"No, Hassan, it would indeed cause me much sorrow."

"Oh!" said he, as he passed his hand over his large head, upon which the coarse hair, that had been shaved off, was commencing to grow again. "Yes, then, Mandana, then—I wanted to tell you yesterday, but I couldn't get it out; but tell me, why are you sorry that I must go away?"

"Because—yes, how can one always tell exactly the reason—because you have always been kind to me, and because you are my countryman and I can talk Persian with you as I used to do with my mother."

"So for no other reason?" he inquired, anxiously, and rubbed his forehead nervously.

"No, no! Because also—when you are once gone, then you will not be here any longer."

"Yes, that's exactly it, that's it! And if you are sorry that I am going, then it must have been pleasant to you here—to have me near you."

"Well, why not? Of course it was nice," she replied, blushing, and attempting to avoid his glance.

"That's it also, and that is still the reason!" he exclaimed, clapping his brawny hands, "and just for this reason I must speak, for this reason we need never separate again if we are sensible."

"But your master will need you!" she exclaimed, with increasing embarrassment, "and it will not do for us always to be a burden upon these good people. I am not allowed to spin, but I must begin soon to look around for work, since I am free and have the document which gives me my liberty, and a strong, able-bodied man like you can not always be nursed."

"Nursed!" said he, laughing heartily. "Work shall be done, work and for three!"

"With the camels, ever upon a journey?"

"There shall be an end of that," he rejoined, smiling. "We shall return to our home. I shall buy me there a pretty piece of meadow-land; for my elder brother has our plantation,

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and whether I understand raising and training camels, ask Haschim."

"But, Hassan, reflect!"

"Reflect! Away with reflection. Willing and having, that is the question! And if you mean that one must have money to buy, and the best plans hitch sometimes, then I can tell you— Do you know how to read? No, neither do I; but there in my pocket I have my final account with my master in his own handwriting. Eleven thousand, three hundred and sixty drachmas were due me at the end of the last trip for wages, you understand, and for profits, in which my master has given me a share, since I have been leading the caravan. Eleven thousand, three hundred and sixty drachmas! He has kept it nearly all, for we had attendance, a little cloth for our bodies we always got from the goods, and a spendthrift I have never been! Eh, little dove, thus stands the account, and what have you got to say now? Can't we buy something for that sum? Yes or no?"

He looked at her triumphantly, but she answered, eagerly:

"Yes, indeed, and in our country, I believe, something very nice."

"And we—you and I—we—an entirely new mode of life must begin. I was seventeen years old when I joined my master, and at the solstice I shall be twenty-six years old. How many years have I been traveling?"

Both thought a long time, then Mandana said, hesitatingly:

"If I am not mistaken, it makes eight."

"Nine, I believe it is," he rejoined, quickly. "Let us see; let me have your hand! See, I begin with seventeen. I was that old when I entered the service. The little finger first —such a sweet little thing!—and now the next!"

With this he seized her right hand and counted on her fingers until he had reached the last finger of her left hand.

The result astonished him, and, shaking his head, he exclaimed:

"There are certainly ten fingers on both hands, but it can not be ten years, it is at most nine!"

And so he began to count again, finding it such an agreeable pastime, but obtained the same result as before; she, however, declared that it was only nine, because she had just calculated it again, and he agreed with her and said her fingers must be bewitched. The game might have continued a long while if it had not suddenly occurred to her that one ought not to count the seventeen, but commence with eighteen on the first finger. Hassan could not exactly understand the principle, and

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although he finally yielded, he would not let her hand go, and continued good-naturedly:

"Now, my dear girl, see this little hand—take it away if you will—I want to keep it and with it the pretty maiden and all that belongs to her. And I shall take you and these two hands together with the bewitched fingers home with me. There they may weave and knit industriously, and as husband and wife we shall never separate, and we shall lead a life—a life—the joys of paradise will, in comparison to it, be like a series of blows with a billet of olive-wood upon the top of one's head; I have a glimmering of it!"

He then tried to take her hand again, but she withdrew it, and in a tone of embarrassment, and with downcast eyes, said:

"No, Hassan; I was afraid of this yesterday, but never, never can this be. I am so grateful, so very grateful; but no, no, it can not be, and so it must remain. I can not be your wife."

"Can not?" said he, gloomily, and the veins in his narrow forehead began to swell. "You were making a fool, then, of me just now? And that talk about gratitude—"

Deeply moved he arose, but she took him by the arm, drew him back upon the bench, and even dared to look at him with a beseechingly tender look in her eyes, which could never look angry a long time, and said:

"How excited you have become again! Of course it will be painful to me to separate from you; and can't you tell from my looks that I am fond of you? But it can not be! I, I—ah, if I could only return to my country with you, with you of all others! And your wife! What a noble, grand thought that is, and how gladly would I not exert these hands for us both, for they are industrious and clever, but—"

"But?" said he, inquisitively, and stretched forward his large, flushed face, with an expression as though he proposed to crush her.

"But for your own sake I can not, I dare not; no, it can not possibly be; for I will not reward all your kindness to me in such an unworthy way. Have you entirely forgotten what I was, what I am? And you? You will soon go home, a free man with a handsome fortune, and can demand respect and honor from every one; but it would be quite different, totally different, if you drag with you a wife like me, a—even if only a former slave!"

"That then is the reason?" said he, interrupting her, and his eyes again became bright. "That is what is distressing you, you poor child? But do you not know who I am; did I

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not explain to you recently what a Masdakite is? We Masdakites know and believe that originally all men were equal; that it would be better for this foolish world if there were neither masters nor servants; but things are as they are. Our pure heavenly Master will perhaps suffer it to be so still a little while; but afterward—it may be quite soon—it will be totally different, and our duty is to hasten the day of equality. With it paradise will come upon this earth, and then for human beings there will be no above nor below, but all will go hand in hand, will uphold one another and associate one with another. Then war and misery will cease; then all that is good and beautiful upon earth will belong to all in common, and every one will as willingly give aid and help to his neighbor as he now injures and oppresses him. We shall not make marriages like other people, but when a man loves a woman, he will say to her: 'Will you be mine?' And if her heart prompts her to assent, she will follow him to his house, but the one may leave the other when love no longer exists; but never have man and wife stuck closer together than my grandparents and parents, and so, just so will we continue to the end; for our love will bind us firmly together with cords that will last longer than life. Now you know the doctrines of our Master Masdak, which my fathers and grandfather followed, and which my mother preached to me when I was still a child. Our whole village believes in it, and there are no slaves there, no, the land that belongs to the village is cultivated by all in community of interest, and they divide the harvest among one another. But, of course, they do not admit strangers, and I must seek my fortune elsewhere. But I shall nevertheless continue to be a Masdakite,* and if I choose a former slave for my wife, I am simply following out the teachings of my master and advancing them. But you—properly none of this has any application to you, for you are the child of a brave and free man, who was respected by all his countrymen, and to them you are no slave, but a prisoner of war! They will honor me as your liberator. But had I found you as you now are, the last slave of a swine-herd, I would have plunged my hand in my bag and would have ransomed you and would have car-

* Eutychius, Bishop of Alexandria, born A. D., 876, thus characterizes the communistical doctrine of Masdak:

"God has bestowed upon men what belongs to them, in order that thou mayest divide it equally among them, and that no more may fall to the lot of one than to that of another. But if one has more of wealth, wives, slaves, and movable property than is expedient, then we will take it from him, in order that we may make him and all others equal."

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ried you home with me as my wife, and none of my people who saw you would have thought the less of me. Now you know it, and I hope that's an end of your objections and affectation."

But Mandana would not yet yield, but looked at him with an expression that seemed to beseech him to have pity upon her, and pointed to her mutilated ears.

Then he shrugged his shoulders and laughed:

"That too, of course! You will not grant me one thing. Well, if it had been your eyes, then you could not have seen, and a blind wife is of no use to a farmer, and I would have left you where you are. But tell me, little dove, can't you hear as sharply as a bird? And the birds—such pretty little creatures!—have you ever seen one with ears, except the ugly bats and owls? It is all nonsense. And besides, who can ever see what you lack, since Miss Pulcheria has combed your hair so prettily toward the front. And even at home! Have you forgot the head-dress of our women? If one had ears like a hare, one need only close the head-dress, and they could not be seen. As you are, you beautiful lily, do you not look ten times as pretty as the most beautiful there, even if they had two, three, or even four ears. A girl with three ears! Just think, Mandana, where could you put the third?"

How heartily he laughed and how delighted he was to have found this joke, and to have made such short work of what might have been very painful to her.

But his boisterous hilarity failed of its effect, and awakened only a silent smile upon her lips, and even this quickly disappeared, and in its place, while her head sunk upon her bosom, there appeared an expression so full of care and grief that he could neither continue with his joke nor could he speak to her again harshly, but said to her in a sympathetic tone and with a mild shake of his head:

"You must not look at me in that way, my dove. I can not stand it. What is it that is still weighing upon your poor little heart? Courage, courage, my precious, and speak without restraint! But wait a minute. Your hand on your mouth! I can spare you the trouble. 'Tis—my poor, darling child!—is it the old affair with the son of the Mukaukas?"

She nodded assent to him, with tears in her eyes; he, however, uttered a sorrowful sigh and said: "I thought so, my poor little heart!"

He then grasped her hand, and continued, with true-hearted confidence:

"That has caused me, too, many unhappy hours, and caused

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me mighty struggles within here, and it went almost so far as to make me leave you here alone and thus deprive us both of joy and happiness. But I came to my senses at the right time. Not because Madame Johanna—and what she says must be true—told me day before yesterday, that this affair with—well, you know—that it was all past now; no, this time reason came from my own mind; for I thought to myself: such an angelic, beautiful, motherless, unprotected little slave, whom the young son of her own master held fast, how could she protect herself? And how barbarously and cruelly her poor, dear heart was punished. Ah, my little girl, my child, cry on! Tears are rising in my eyes also! It could not be otherwise, it came upon you in this fashion overwhelmingly. You and I and the Great King and all the heavenly hosts, who can help it now? But see, I, poor fool, I understand how it happened, and do not complain and have nothing to pardon you for. It was a great misfortune. But, God be praised, it came to an end in good time, and I can forget it now and forever if you only tell me: 'It is now all past and gone forever, and lies in its grave like something dead.'"

At these words she drew his hand, before he could prevent her, with impetuous tenderness to her lips and began to sob:

"There is no other person on earth so kind, so heavenly as you are, Hassan, and my mother will bless you for it! Do with me what you will! In order that you may know it full well, I will declare that it is all past, gone forever, and if my mind ever again turns to it, it will only be with horror and revulsion. It was truly exactly as you said. My mother was dead, and there was no one to warn or protect me! I was scarcely sixteen years old, a simple, inexperienced creature, and then he called me to him, and it seemed as though I was in a dream, and when I awoke—"

"Here we are," said he, interrupting her, and wiping his eyes, attempted to laugh; "here we have lain close beside each other with great holes in our heads, and just as it is always most charming to me at home, when the hard winter frost has disappeared, the snow melted, and all at once the flowers in the valleys burst forth in bloom, so it will finally be with us. Grand and glorious it will now be, my precious girl! Day before yesterday, you see, I was still in the dark, for your misfortune let me have no peace at all, and it went against the grain, as you may well imagine. But then, as I lay there in my chamber, and the moon shone in upon my bed, then," and now he continued with a dreamy expression that beautified his rough face, "then I had to ask myself: hasn't the moon up

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there this evening again brought refreshment and lovely light upon the earth although this morning it was buried beneath the ocean? And then the heart of a human being, though it had sunk very low, might it not now again rise up purified and bright, after it has washed itself clean and taken a good rest? And such a heart! One would perhaps prefer to have all its love for one's self alone, but this love can be bestowed on more than one; then I bethought me of my mother, how tenderly she had loved me, and when one child after another came she heaped her affection upon each in turn, but I had none the less when she held my youngest little sister upon her breast, nor did she, when my mother petted and kissed me. So it must be! And she, thought I, even though she once loved another, yet there may remain a goodly portion for me!"

"Yes, yes, Hassan, most assuredly!" she exclaimed, and looked at him with eyes filled with tears and an expression of ineffable gratitude. "All that I have of love and tenderness shall be yours, and yours alone!"

Thereupon he joyfully exclaimed:

"That's right, that was bravely said! One can take hold of that! I call this a fine morning! I sat down under this sycamore-tree an aimless vagabond, and I arise a future freeholder, who possesses the handsomest little wife upon the face of the earth."

They sat a long time beneath the luxuriant shade of the tree, and he asked nothing more than the right to look at her, and to the old, old questions of a lover only to receive an answer with her lips, her eyes, or a gentle motion of her head. Her hands were no longer active, but both would have ridiculed with a feeling of pity any who had scolded because of the scorching, parching heat of the forenoon. A pair of turtle-doves above their heads exhibited greater sensibility to the heat of the sun than they, for they had closed their eyes, and the head of the female rested calmly upon the dark ring on the neck of the male.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SEIZURE BY THE ARABS OF THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION, AND CERTAIN EVENTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

THE heat of the day had as little effect upon Wekil Obada as upon the Persian lovers. Wekil looked upon the governor's mansion as his own property, and all that he found therein awakened in him the keenest interest, and not merely interest induced by a lust for wealth, for in the first place it was of the

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greatest importance to him to find documents that might justify in Medina his procedure against Orion and the confiscation of his property.

Great things were being done there, and if the conspiracy against the Caliph Omar turned out successfully, he would have little to fear, and might the more confidently hope for the approval of the new vicegerent and commander, the greater the sums were, which he would shortly send to Medina, exceeding even the greatest that his predecessor had ever contributed to the national treasure.

He proceeded from room to room with the curiosity and avidity of a child, touched everything, tried the softness of all the couches, looked into parchments, not one word of which he understood, and then threw them aside, sniffed in the room of the deceased lady of the house at all the essences and medicines of which she had made use, ground his teeth with delight when he discovered in her little casket valuable jewelry and some gold coins, put the handsomest diamond ring he could find upon his finger, already overloaded with rings, and finally searched, with the greatest zeal, the apartments which Orion had occupied.

His interpreter, who understood how to read Greek, had to translate to him during this search every piece of writing except such as contained verses. While he paid heed to the reading he pulled and tore the strings of the young man's lyre with his awkward and uneducated hand, poured some of the fine and sweet-smelling toilet oil into his hand, and stroked his beard with it, and did not cease to make faces at himself in the handsome mirror of Orion.

To his chagrin nothing suspicious could be found among the hundreds of objects that were lying around, until, just as he was preparing to leave, his eye fell upon some little tablets that had been thrown into a waste basket that stood near the writing-table. He forthwith called the interpreter's attention to them, and, although there was very little upon the double tablet that was legible, still it seemed to be of the utmost importance to the negro; for it read as follows:

"Orion, son of George, to Paula, the daughter of Thomas:

"You have already learned that it has proven impossible for me to share in the rescue of the nuns. Do not misjudge me on this account! Your noble and only too well-founded wish to afford assistance to your fellow believers would have sufficed—"

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From this point on the characters that had been traced in the wax had been carefully erased, and scarcely a single one could be deciphered, in fact, after the lines that were legible there followed so few erased words that one was forced to believe that the letter had never been completed, and such, indeed, was the case.

Although it gave Wekil no positively conclusive evidence against Orion, still it authorized inferences of importance, for the daughter of Thomas must have been privy to the adventure that had cost the lives of so many brave Mussulmen, and the negro had ascertained through the money-changer in Fostat that she was on very friendly terms with the son of the Mukaukas, and had intrusted to him the management of her property. These two must be brought forward as conspirators, and beyond a doubt, Orion at least was shown to be an accessory to the crime by the writing.

Plotinus, Bishop of Memphis, at whose instance the pursuers had been sent out, must disclose what the young woman refused to tell. Immediately after receiving notice of the action that had been planned, he had set out after the patriarch, and had just returned yesterday morning from Upper Egypt. In Memphis he had transmitted to Wekil two complaints of the ecclesiastical prince against Orion. One had reference to the flight of the nuns, the other to the embezzlement of a costly emerald, which was the property of the church, and both together had emboldened the negro to confiscate the property of the young man, more especially because the bitter manner in which the charges were preferred showed him that he had in Benjamin a powerful supporter.

Paula must be taken into custody, and he had no doubt that her testimony would, in some manner or other, be injurious to Orion. He would have greatly preferred to have given her a hearing at once, but he had other matters to attend to to-day.

The search of the treasury required the greatest expenditure of time. It was undertaken under the guidance of Nilus, the secretary of the treasury. Everything that the official pointed out as bonds, deeds, contracts of purchase and lease, books of rental and the like, together with large sums of gold and silver coin were forthwith loaded upon ox-wagons and camels and dispatched across the river under strong escorts. The records and documents relating to former times, the family archives and everything connected therewith, the negro left untouched. He was most assuredly an indefatigable man; for although these labors required the whole day, he allowed himself no time for refreshment, in fact, he did not even have a luncheon nor

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a cooling drink brought to him. As the day advanced he inquired more frequently after the bishop, ever in a more impatient and excited manner.

He would have willingly gone to the patriarch, but who was Plotinus? Like all upstarts, he regarded his failure to appear as an act of personal disrespect.

But the shepherd of the flock at Memphis was not a proud prelate, but a modest and pious man. His ecclesiastical superior, the patriarch, had intrusted him with important messages to the commander Amr, or his representative, and yet he let Wekil expect him in vain, nor did he send him any message; however, his old house-keeper dispatched the acolyte,* who was the bishop's personal attendant, to Philippus. Her master, who had at other times always been so robust and healthy, had yesterday, soon after his return, in broad daylight, lain down and had not arisen again. In his fever and burning thirst he seemed not to know where he was, nor to recognize those around him. Plotinus had always affirmed that prayer was the best medicine for Christians; but when his poor body had become alarmingly hot the housekeeper sent for the doctor, but the messenger returned with the news that Philippus had gone off on a journey.

And such was the fact. A letter from old Haschim had necessitated his leaving Memphis. The merchant's son, who had met with an accident, seemed to grow no better. It seemed that internal organs had been injured, and that his life was in danger. The anxious father besought the doctor, in whom he had acquired the greatest confidence, in the most earnest terms to come to Dschidda and examine the patient and undertake his cure. In addition, he sent word to Hassan, his caravan-leader, to join him as soon as the state of his health would permit. This writing, that closed with greetings for Paula, whose father the merchant had been jealously searching for, had greatly excited Philippus. How could he leave Memphis in this time of pestilence and dire necessity?

And Johanna and her daughter!

On the other hand his impulse was to hasten away on Paula's account. If he were only once far away from her! And how gladly would he do his best to rescue the brave old man's son! In spite of all this, however, he would have remained, had not his old friend unexpectedly placed himself on Haschim's side and urged him to undertake the trip. It was his duty and his wish to watch over the ladies in Rufinus's house. The assist-

* Attendant and servant of the priest.

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ants of Philippus could take his place with many of the sick, and the others would die in any event; he himself had declared that there was no approved remedy for the plague. Furthermore he, Philippus, had a short while ago been of the opinion that he could never again recover his peace of mind so long as he was near Paula. Now he had the very best opportunity to leave without attracting attention, and at the same time to do an act of genuine charity.

So Philippus gave in, and a few hours later had commenced his journey with a strange mixture of feelings.

Old Horus Apollo did very little to advance the ease and comfort of his own person, but in one respect he took good care of himself. It was difficult for him to walk, and as he was fond of breathing the fresh air at the hour of twilight, and sometimes later of visiting the astronomical observatory, he always kept for himself an ass of the best and noblest blood.

To pay a high price for such an animal seemed to him perfectly proper, provided only it was such a one as he wished, that is, strong, trustworthy, meek and of light color.

His father and grandfather, priests of Isis, had always ridden white asses, and consequently he did so likewise.

During the last sultry weeks he had rarely been out-of-doors, and to-day he was waiting until the hour before sunset to fulfill his promise.

Clothed in snow-white linen, with new sandals upon his feet, freshly shaven, protected, after the manner of his fathers, from the burning rays of the sun by a long, handsomely arranged wig, as well as by an umbrella, he mounted his noble white ass, conscious of having done his best as far as the exterior of his person was concerned, and his Ethiopian slave followed behind on foot.

It was not yet dark when he stopped before the door of Rufinus's house.

His old heart had not beat so rapidly for a long time. "Just as if I were going to inspect my bride," said he, jestingly, to himself. Well, it was a question of concluding a compact for life.

"One ought at least to lose curiosity with one's hair and teeth," he continued, reproachfully, to himself.

But it was still there, and he could not conceal it from himself, that he was very curious to see how that woman looked, whom, though he had never seen her, he hated, because she was the daughter of a prefect and a patrician, and had made his beloved Philippus unhappy.

While he was dismounting, a delicate young girl conducted

an elderly lady in costly but simple apparel into the garden. That must be the little humming-bird and Orion's Byzantine lady friend.

How unfortunate that was! So many women all at once!

Their presence could only interfere with and disturb him, who was unaccustomed to associating with ladies. But what could he do? Moreover, the arrivals did not appear to be such disagreeable people. The little humming-bird was a wonderfully nice little mouse, a hundred times too nice for the crazy son of the governor, even without her millions. The matron had a pleasant, attractive face, just as Philippus had described her.

But, and this ruined everything, he could not dare speak of the death of Rufinus, and consequently must remain silent as to his plan in the presence of these strangers, and so he had for no earthly purpose swallowed so much dust and endured so much heat. To-morrow he must ignominiously go through the same thing a second time.

The first persons he met were a handsome young couple, the Masdakite and Mandana. There was no question, it must be they, and so he approached them, informed Hassan of the wish of his master, and offered, in Philippus's name, to advance him the expenses of the trip; but the caravan-guide struck upon his sleeve, that concealed a handsome little sum in gold pieces, and exclaimed, good-naturedly:

"All provisions have been made, and for two travelers to the east! Permit me to present to you my betrothed; the time has come, my little dove! We are going back home!"

The giant said all this in a deep voice so full of joy and happiness, and the beautiful girl looked up at him with eyes so full of love and gratitude that the old man became quite gleeful, and he, who was wont to see in every event some augury of the future, looked upon this meeting, at the moment when he was about to enter the house that was perhaps to be his home, as a good omen.

And as his visit had begun auspiciously, so it continued; for Rufinus's widow and daughter received him with much cordiality. Pulcheria immediately brought forward her father's arm-chair for him, and put a cushion behind his back, and all was done in so quiet, natural and kind a manner that it warmed his old heart, and he said to himself that it would be too much bliss if one had such attentions every day and every hour.

The young girl received several kind and jocular recognitions of her polite attentions, and the lady from Constantinople at

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once entered into the humor of the remark. She had seen him on his handsome ass, praised the animal, and would not believe the old man himself was more than eighty years old. The information that Philippus had gone away on a trip excited regret on all sides; he, however, was charmed to see that Pulcheria shuddered when she heard this news and then withdrew in embarrassment.

What a lovely, pure, amiable, and withal beautiful face this young girl had! She should and must become his little daughter, and in the midst of the conversation with the others the little jests of Catharine, the kind interrogations of the matron and Johanna, he saw with his mind's eye Philippus and this lovely creature as man and wife and sweet little children playing around them. He had come to console and to mourn with the afflicted, and he had spent a joyous hour, such a one as he had not enjoyed for a long time. He had been received with the other visitors in the *viridarium*, which was now brightly illuminated with several lamps, and ever and anon he would glance at the doors, which opened into this central portion of the house, and was considering what use should be made later of the various apartments. Suddenly light steps were heard behind him, the matron arose, the humming-bird hastened to meet the person who was entering, and immediately thereafter there appeared the tall figure of a young woman dressed in mourning. She greeted the matron with stately dignity, cast a glance of hearty and sympathetic meaning at Johanna and Pulcheria, and when Johanna mentioned the name of the old man, she advanced toward him and extended to him her hand, a hand that was as white as marble, cold, slender, and of genuine patrician mold.

Yes, she was beautiful, strangely beautiful. He could scarcely remember ever having seen such a beautiful woman. Verily a blameless master-work of the Creator, well calculated to call forth the devotion of obedient admirers like an unapproachable goddess; but she must renounce all claim to his devotion; for in these statue-like features, the whiteness of which was made more prominent by her black dress, lay nothing that attracted him. Out of those eyes poured forth no vivifying light, in that magnificently arched bosom could be beating no kind and loving heart. At the touch of her hand a chill had passed over him, and her presence seemed to act with a subduing effect upon the rest of those who were present.

And such was indeed the fact.

Paula had been summoned to greet the senator's wife and Catharine. The former, she thought, had been led merely by

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curiosity to call upon her, and everything and everybody connected with Heliodora had from the beginning been repulsive to her. She had lost all confidence in Catharine; for a few days before the acolyte, who was the personal attendant of the Bishop of Memphis, and whose child Rufinus had cured of a diseased foot, had been to Johanna and warned her against Catharine, who had betrayed to his master a few weeks before a most important secret that had some connection with her husband and had caused Plotinus to repair immediately to Fostat. It was in fact hard to believe a "friend" guilty of such an act, but she, who, as she herself confessed, was so fond of eavesdropping in the garden near by, it must have been and no other, who had informed the bishop of what was to be undertaken in behalf of the nuns. The accurate statements of the acolyte left no room for doubt upon this point. Paula's heart was not prone to think evil of her neighbor, but under such circumstances her nature, open and incapable of falsehood, could not help being cold and distant toward the little girl, and the more cordially Catharine approached her the more coldly would Paula repel her.

The old man observed all this, and concluded that the manner in which Paula now acted must be characteristic of her. He saw embodied in her patrician haughtiness, selfish coldness of heart, and offensive and unbounded pride in her ancestors, who were detested, and noble but in birth only; they stood before him in flesh and blood. As he hated her whole race, so, too, he hated this perfect copy of the original, and his hatred became tenfold greater when he remembered all that she had inflicted upon the son of his heart, all that she might yet do to him, should his favorite scheme prove on her account impracticable; for he would rather have remained alone in his last days, and even separated from Philippus than share with this woman table, house, and life, since she had repelled with exasperating and icy superiority the cordial advances of the sweet, harmless little Catharine. During the evening meal, when he looked at her, his food stuck in his throat; to have heard her proud voice even in the next room would have robbed his studies of their attraction, the touch of her cold hand in saying good-night would have destroyed his sleep. Even now her presence soon became insufferable to him; it seemed to him a challenge, an insult, and if he had ever had the desire to get her out of the way of his friend and himself, or, in case of necessity, to use force in accomplishing his design, this desire had full sway over him now.

Irritated and out of humor, he took leave of the others, and

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carefully avoided honoring Paula even with a look, when she advanced toward him, as he arose, in order to exchange a few words with him, and to show him how much she esteemed his adopted son.

Pulcheria accompanied him into the garden, and he promised her to come again to-morrow or the day after, but she must take care that he should find her mother and herself alone, for he had no desire to have the pride and conceit of this woman from Damascus "thrust under his nose" a second time.

He repelled with impatience Pulcheria's attempt to defend her friend, and hastened home with curses upon his old lips.

In the meantime Martina had approached Paula in her confidential, sociable manner. She had once met her parents in Constantinople, and spoke of them with tender affection. This broke the icy stiffness of the young girl, and when Martina spoke of Orion, her "great Sesostris," and of the universal respect which he had enjoyed in Constantinople, and then referred sympathetically and with much feeling to his misfortune, it pleased Paula so much that all signs of constraint disappeared, and the conversation between the two new acquaintances became every moment more animated, frank, and interesting.

When the hour for separation came both felt that they would learn to become fond of each other, and when Paula was called out of the room, while they were taking leave, and left the parlor with the following words addressed to Martina alone:

"I shall hope to see you again; but of course as I am the younger it will be my duty to call upon you!" Martina exclaimed:

"What a noble creature! Verily the worthy daughter of a noble father! And her mother! Oh, Madame Johanna! This poor earth has never been adorned with a more lovely being! And she was called away so soon; she was just in the bloom of her youth!" She then turned to Catharine, and, threatening her with her finger, continued:

"How falsely you have all described this young girl to me! One speaks usually of silver kernels in golden shells, but in her case both are of gold. I know you all! And you, both of you—great heavens!—I know perfectly well what clouded the clear eyes of you little kittens! One sees, in fact, generally as one wishes to see! I wager that you will confirm my opinion, Madame Johanna: this beautiful Paula is a thoroughly noble person! Ay, a 'noble' person! That is a word full of pathos, and Heaven knows how rarely one can use it! I use it rarely, but for this girl I know no other, and it is not misapplied!"

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"Assuredly not!" rejoined Johanna, with perfect confidence.

Martina sighed to herself and thought: "Poor Heliodora! To be perfectly frank, my 'great Sesostris' and Paula would be the right pair. But, for Heaven's sake, what can be done with the poor, love-sick, unfortunate little woman?"

This flashed through her brain while Catharine attempted to justify herself, and declared that she had always recognized Paula's great attractions, but she could be so haughty, so fearfully haughty! She had just given Mme. Martina herself a slight taste of it.

Pulcheria forthwith interrupted her in order to defend her friend with all her might; but she did not get very far, for the loud voices of men were heard in the vestibule, and suddenly Perpetua, the nurse, rushed into the room with terror written in her face, and exclaimed, without heeding the presence of the strangers:

"Oh, alas, Madame Johanna! Another terrible misfortune! Here are those Arabian devils again, and with them the interpreter and clerk. And they have been sent—merciful Saviour, can it be?—and they have brought a warrant of arrest, and my poor child is to be carried away to prison, through the whole city, on foot to the prison!"

The faithful old woman concealed her face in her hands and began to sob convulsively, and terror took possession of them all.

Johanna withdrew from the *viridarium*, pale and silent, and Martina exclaimed:

"A disgusting, worthless country is this! Great heavens, they are even beginning to attack us poor women! Children, children, bring me a chair, quick! I feel wretchedly— To prison! Drag this glorious, angelic creature through the streets to prison! If the arrest warrant is there, then—then she must go to the dungeon; no angel can save her from that. But to drag her through the streets, this noble, wonderful girl, as though she were a miserable thief, no, it is intolerable! What one woman can do for another shall certainly not be left undone as long as I am here and can stand on two strong legs! Catharine, my child, don't you understand? Why do you stand there staring at me as if I were a feathered ape? Why do your fat horses eat such fine oats? Well, haven't you understood yet? Quick, like lightning, run over and have the large, close carriage, the one they fetched me in, hitched up and driven into the garden here. At last a ray of intelligence has struck you! And now take your little foot in your hand and be off!"

With these words she clapped her hands, as if she were driv-

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ing chickens out of the garden, and the little humming-bird had nothing to do but obey.

Then Martina began to feel for her porte-monnaie, and when she found it she exclaimed, with a look of confidence: "Thank God! Now I can converse with the unbelieving rascals! This language"—and she jingled the gold coins together—"everybody understands! Come, my good lady, where are these fellows?"

And the cosmopolitan language of the matron had the desired effect; for the leader of the guards was persuaded with the help of the interpreter to permit Paula to be carried to prison in the carriage, to promise to secure her kind treatment, and to allow old Betta, who begged piteously with tears in her eyes for the privilege, to accompany the prisoner to her dungeon.

At this terrific surprise Paula preserved her dignity and composure.

At first, when she had to take leave of Pulcheria and Maria, who clung to her with determination, and declared that they were going with her to prison, she could not restrain her tears.

The clerk had informed her that Bishop Plotinus had lodged the accusation against her of having devised the rescue of the nuns and of having abetted their flight, and Johanna felt her knees tremble when Paula whispered gently into her ear:

"Beware of Catharine! She alone could have betrayed us, but even though she has informed them of what Rufinus did for the sisters, we must deny it with decision and firmness. Have no fears! They shall not learn the least thing from me."

Then she continued, in a firm and loud tone: "I need not ask you to love me still. Thanks to you both, warm, inexpressible thanks for all you—you, Pul"—and, while Maria clung to her in desperation and buried her little head in her dress, weeping piteously, Paula drew Johanna and Pulcheria to her—"you, Pul, and you, Johanna, you have made a poor, forsaken girl your friend, and bestowed ineffable happiness upon her until fate has decreed that all of us— You know, alas, you know full well—all that you gave me, bestow now upon Maria, my precious little darling! But one thing more! Alas, the interpreter is growing impatient again. Patience one short moment! When the messenger returns, if he brings news of my father, or—oh, God! oh, God!—my father himself, then send me word—gracious Saviour!—bring him to me! And if I am no longer with you when he comes, then tell him that it was the dearest wish of my life to find him again, to see him once more. And then"—these words she whispered

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softly into Johanna's ear—" then ask my father to love Orion as he would his own beloved son. And tell them both I loved them to the end, so passionately, so ineffably, and so deeply!"

And then she cried aloud, kissing each one upon their lips and eyes: "I love you and shall never cease to do so—you, Johanna, you, my dear Pul, and you, my little Maria, my sweet, precious angel!"

Thereupon the little humming-bird rushed up to her with outstretched arms, but Johanna thrust her back with an ominous motion of the hand, and the three united in one last embrace, as though they were one, and would permit nothing foreign or disturbing to approach them.

But, nevertheless, Catharine made one more attempt to approach Paula, but Martina, whose eyes, filled with tears, were fastened upon the parting friends, caught her by the shoulder to hold her back, and whispered to her:

"Do not disturb them, child! Such hearts attract to themselves that which they desire. Old as I am, I would only that I were worthy to be called by them!"

Thereupon the interpreter warned them with firmness that the time was up. The three ladies released each other, but Maria continued to cling to Paula, even while she of her own accord advanced toward Martina and embraced her.

Martina took her head between her hands, kissed her tenderly, and exclaimed, scarcely able to command her voice:

"God bless and protect you, my child! I thank Him that he has permitted me to meet you. In the Imperial City one can not remain so natural and pure in heart as you are, but as friends of our friends, there we can stand the test, at least myself and my husband, the senator! If God will only grant me an opportunity, you shall know that I speak the truth. As long as Justinus and his wife live, you need never, no, never, be alone in the world. Remember this, my child, for I mean it sincerely and honestly."

With these words she kissed Paula once more, and when she went out to get into the carriage, and had given the Greek Eudoxia and Mandana, who were modestly standing near by, weeping bitterly, a parting kiss, and had extended her hand to the deformed gardener and to the Masdakite, both of whom began to shed tears, Catharine got in her way, seized her arm with an injured and excited look, and exclaimed, impetuously:

"And for me, for me you have not even one word?"

Paula released herself from her grasp and whispered into her ear:

"Thanks for the carriage! You know that it is to carry me

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to prison, and I fear that it is your treachery that takes me thither. If I am mistaken, then forgive me; if not, then your punishment will scarcely be less severe than my fate. You are still young, Catharine; try to become better."

Thereupon she entered the carriage, accompanied by old Betta, and only saw Maria throw herself into Johanna's arms and sob convulsively.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CATHARINE'S VISIT TO BISHOP PLOTINUS.

THE widow Susannah had never been fond of the young girl from Damascus, but her fate horrified her and awakened her sympathy. Inquiry must be made whether it would not be feasible to send to her in the prison better food than would be supplied to her there. This was the duty of a Christian, and the misfortune of her friend seemed to affect her daughter also very deeply; for when she returned with Martina she looked so overwhelmed and confused that a stranger would never have thought of comparing her with a joyous little bird.

Once more she had been pierced with a poisoned arrow.

Up to this time she had been bad for herself alone, now she was despicable in the eyes of another also.

Paula knew that she had betrayed her! The traitor had herself been betrayed. The hated one was now justified in looking upon her as evil and despicable, and this made her hate her all the more deeply. Until now when had she ever failed to receive a kind greeting and a warm welcome? And what a snub had she received to-day, not only from Paula, but from Mme. Martina also, who must have observed something, and whose cold reserve had just now seemed to her unbearable.

The old bishop was the cause of it all; for he had been untrue to his promise that he would keep her betrayal as secret as a confession. Yes, he must have broken his word, for she had had no accomplice. Perhaps he had even mentioned her name to the Arabs, and then she would have to appear and testify before the court, and in what a light she would then stand in the eyes of Orion, her mother, Johanna and Martina!

Old Rufinus, she well knew, had fallen a sacrifice to the adventure, and this caused her sincere sorrow. Her neighbors had never shown her anything but kindness, and she had no desire to make them unhappy. If she were compelled to testify before the court, it might involve them too, and she bore no one malice except against those who had robbed her of Orion's love.

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Yes, the testifying in open court, that would be the worst thing in the world, and must be avoided at any price.

Where on earth could Bishop Plotinus be?

He had returned home yesterday and had not yet been to call upon her mother, whom he was in the habit of visiting every day. This failure on the part of the bishop seemed to her to forebode evil. Everything depended upon reminding the old gentleman as soon as possible of his promise; for if he should mention her name to-morrow at the examination of the witnesses, which he of course must attend, then the magistrates, interpreters and clerks would visit her house also, and then—sorrows!—once already she had had to appear in court and testify, and she had no desire to experience again all that had resulted from that trial.

But how could she to-day, or to-morrow at break of day, gain access to the bishop?

The carriage had not yet returned, and if she— It lacked two hours of midnight— Yes, it must be done!

Forthwith she began to discuss with her mother the cause of the bishop's absence. Susannah soon showed signs of uneasiness, especially as she had heard that the old gentleman had returned from his journey quite unwell, and that his servant had been running around in search of a doctor. Catharine then offered to drive to the old gentleman's house to inquire after him. The carriage was still hitched up, and her maid could accompany her. She declared she must go to see how her worthy friend was.

Mme. Susannah found this all very nice, but she thought that it was very late for such proceedings; however, her darling had said, "I must," and with that the question had from the very beginning been decided.

Susannah laid down her arms, the maid was summoned, and as soon as the carriage drove up Catharine threw her arms around her mother's neck, promised not to keep her waiting long, and shortly thereafter the vehicle stopped before the episcopal palace. There she commanded the maid to await her return, and entered the immense long building alone.

In the spacious vestibule, which was lighted only by an unpretending little lamp, everything was quiet and deserted, even the gate-keeper must have gone out; but she was familiar with every turn and corner of the place, so she entered through the *impluvium* into the *viridarium*, where the bishop was wont to sit at this hour of the night. But here, too, it was dark and no one answered her gentle calls.

In the next room, into which she entered with some feeling

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of apprehension, a slave was lying by a large wine flask and a lantern, snoring. The sight of him quieted her somewhat. The adjacent room was Plotinus's bed-chamber, into which she had never before gone. A dull light shone through the open door, and there could be heard a lamentable noise of groaning and rattling. Thereupon she called aloud several times the name of the housekeeper, but she received no answer. The slave behind the wine flask showed no sign of life, but soon she heard a voice that was very familiar to her, and which, in a tone rather of groaning than of speaking, asked:

"Who is there? Is he coming? Have you found him at last?"

All the bishop's servants had taken to flight from fear of the pestilence, and so, too, the alcolyte, who had a wife and children. The housekeeper was compelled to leave her master in order to find the doctor, who had already been there once. The last slave that had remained behind, a faithful, jovial and foolish fellow, was left in charge of the sick man, but he had fetched a jug of wine out of the warehouse, now no longer watched, and had soon emptied it and had then fallen asleep, overcome by the effects of the wine and the oppressive heat of the night.

Catharine immediately made herself known, and heard in reply a kind but scarcely audible greeting:

"Ah, 'tis you, you, my little girl!"

Then she seized the lantern and approached the sick man.

He had stretched out his emaciated arms to welcome her, but when she entered with the light he clasped his hands before his sensitive eyes, and exclaimed in a tone of pain and uneasiness:

"No, no, it hurts; take the lamp away!"

Then Catharine set the lamp down upon a low trunk, behind the head of the bed, approached the suffering man with empty hands, gave him her mother's messages, and asked him how he was and why he was all alone; but he gave her only obscure answers, that were uttered with great difficulty and with a rattling sound, and requested her to come nearer because he could not understand her so far off. He said he was very ill, and was probably going to die. It was very kind in her to come to see him; she had always been his favorite, his pious little Catharine.

"And you have come hither, my child," he concluded, "to get the old man's blessing, and you shall have it with all my heart."

With these words he benevolently stretched his hand toward

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her, but she followed an inner impulse, and, deeply moved, knelt down by his own couch.

Thereupon he laid his hot right hand upon her head and murmured words of blessing; she, however, scarcely heard them, for his hand seemed to her as heavy as lead, and the heat of it hurt her and made her very apprehensive. To see him, the faithful old friend of her childhood, suffering in this manner, perhaps dying, caused her sincere pain; however, she could not forget what had brought her there; but how could she venture to interrupt him in his work of love?

He was giving her his blessing, that was so kind; but this murmuring, it seemed it would last forever, and the burden of his scorching hand upon her head became more and more ponderous and finally unendurable. Scarcely able to control herself longer, she summoned all her strength; and now she perceived that the old man, instead of using the usual forms of benediction, had been murmuring incomprehensible and incoherent words.

She then released herself from his hot, frightful hand, laid it upon the bed, and was about to ask him whether he had betrayed her and had mentioned her name to the patriarch, but, great God! there were upon his cheeks the same black spots that she had observed on the cheeks of the infected man in the house of Medea with the Curls, and, with a scream of terror, she sprung up and snatched the lamp from the trunk, and while she cast its rays into the face of the suffering man without heeding his cries of pain, she grasped his hands, with which he attempted to shield his eyes from the light, drew them forcibly back and rushed from room to room, out into the vestibule, after she had convinced herself that her eyes had not deceived her.

Here she met the housekeeper returning home, who took the lamp out of her hand, and tried to detain her by asking her questions, but she only screamed out to her:

"You have the plague in your house! Have the gate locked!" and hastened by the doctor into the open air. She made one spring into the carriage, and as the horses started she groaned out to her maid: "The plague, the plague is there. Plotinus has the plague!"

The terrified woman tried to console Catharine, and assured her that she must be mistaken, for such hellish things would not dare attack such a holy man; but the young girl paid no heed to her, and only commanded her to have her a bath made ready as soon as they reached home.

She felt crushed, and on the place where the hot hand of the

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infected old man had lain so long she felt incessantly a heavy, repulsive pressure, ay, when at last the carriage was driven into the garden, it still seemed to her as if her head was weighed down by something warm, heavy and horrible, something of which she could never get rid.

The windows of the house were already dark; the only ray of light that could be seen emerged from the window of the room on the parterre which Heliodora occupied.

Then a fiendish thought shot through her overexcited, restless brain, and without looking to the right or to the left she gave way to it, and entered the house, and then went past a curtain into the bed-chamber of her beautiful guest.

There lay Heliodora in bed, still tortured by a headache, which had prevented her from going with Catharine to visit the bishop, and did not observe her late visitor, until she stood close by the bed, and addressed her.

One simple lamp cast a gloomy light around the room, and the young widow in the safe twilight of the place had never before appeared so charming to the little girl. A *robe de nuit* of the finest transparent material concealed but partially her divine form. A delicious, scarcely perceptible odor proceeded from her luxuriant blonde hair, a perfume with which this beautiful woman was always surrounded. Her hair lay in heavy coils upon her magnificently rounded bosom and the snow-white pillow like two shining serpents. Her face, which was turned upward, was infinitely lovely and restful, and as she lay there languidly smiling at Catharine she resembled an angel wearied in well-doing.

No man could have withstood the charms of this woman, and Orion, too, had fallen a victim to them.

Before her lay a lute, from which she drew forth soft, fascinating tones, and these increased the insnaring charms which her presence inspired. Catharine's whole being was in an uproar, and she scarcely knew how she summoned strength enough to return Heliodora's greeting and ask her how it was possible for her to be playing the lute with such a headache.

"To pass the fingers gently over the strings quiets and cools the blood," she replied, sweetly. "But you, my dear child, you look as if you were suffering more severely than I. Were you in the carriage that just drove up?"

"Yes," replied Catharine. "I have just been to see our dear old bishop; he is sick unto death, and he too will soon be snatched away from us. Alas, this day! First Orion's mother, then Paula, and then this last blow! Oh, Heliodora, Heliodora!" At these words she threw herself upon her knees by

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the bed, and buried her face in the bosom of the sympathetic young woman.

She saw the moist eyes of the young girl involuntarily fill with tears, and her tender heart was moved with compassion at the sorrow of the joyous little creature upon whom so much woe was inflicted at so early an age, and she bent over the child, kissed her affectionately upon the forehead, and spoke words of consolation to her.

Catharine pressed closer and closer to her, and pointing to the place on her head upon which the hot hand of the sick man had lain, said:

"Here, kiss me here, 'tis there that I feel such excruciating pain! Yes, that is right, it relieves me so much!"

And while the tender-hearted young woman touched her beautiful mouth to her pestilential hair Catharine closed her eyes, and she felt like a gladiator, who, after having used his weapons only for the purpose of practice, for the first time enters the arena for the purpose of piercing the heart of his assailant. She seemed to herself stranger, larger than she had ever been before; ay, she was like all-pervading death, breathing itself into the breast of its victim.

She was wholly under the influence of these feelings as she knelt there upon the soft carpet, and did not observe that a female form had approached the couch of her comforter, nor did she see her make signs to the lovely young woman.

But when she again cried out: "Another kiss here; it burns so fearfully there!" she felt two strange hands upon her temples and other lips than those of Heliodora firmly pressed against her head.

She turned her eyes up, surprised and horror-stricken, into the smiling countenance of her own mother, who had hastened after her to hear how the bishop was, and who had then claimed a right to take part in soothing the pain of her darling.

How successful the little unexpected attack had been!

But what had suddenly happened to her little daughter?

As though struck by lightning, or stung by an adder, she sprung up, looked into her eyes with an expression of terror, and when Susannah attempted to hold her little head fast again, and kiss once more the crazy place that was hurting her so badly, she thrust her from her, and, beside herself, rushed out of the chamber into the hall, and thence down the steps that led into the bath-room.

Her mother followed her with her eyes and shook her head in astonishment. Then she turned to Heliodora and, shrugging her shoulders, said, with tears in her eyes:

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"Poor, poor little child! Too many distressing things have fallen upon her all at once. A short while ago her life was like a bright summer's day, and now the hail is pelting her from all sides. Of course she has brought sad tidings from the bishop."

"He is said to be deathly ill," replied the young woman, sympathetically.

"Our dearest, most faithful friend," sobbed the widow. "Yes, verily it is too much! Often I think I must succumb, and she, a child scarcely grown! And with what resignation she bears even the severest! Oh, Heliodora, you do not know the half of all that has befallen her, but perhaps you have observed how she has tried to seem bright in order to alleviate the sufferings of my heart. Not a sigh, not a complaint has yet crossed her lips. Like a saint, she accommodates herself to everything without murmuring. But now that her beloved old friend has been visited, she has, for the first time, given away to her grief. She knows full well what Plotinus was to me—"

Here she began again to sob, and after she had become somewhat composed she apologized for her weakness and took leave of her beautiful guest. In the meantime Catharine was in the bath.

A bath-room was one of the handsomest portions of every wealthy Græco-Egyptian house, and her deceased father had caused his to be built in unusual magnificence.

It consisted of two parts: one for the ladies and one for the gentlemen, and both were finished with equal elegance. White marble, yellow alabaster, brown porphyry everywhere, and the floor was of gorgeous Byzantine mosaic on bright gold background. There were no designs as in the heathen bath-rooms, but instead there were upon the walls, in golden letters, passages from the Bible, and a cross above the couches that were covered with giraffe skins.

Silver lamps were suspended from the center of the ceiling, which was surrounded, as though intended for a challenge, with the cardinal declaration of the Jacobite creed, written in the Coptic language and characters: "We believe in the one, sole divine nature of Jesus Christ."

The large basin had been filled without delay for Catharine, since the bath-stoves were heated every evening for the use of the ladies.

As she undressed her maid showed her a diseased date. The chief gardener had showed it to her upon his discovering that afternoon that the pestilence had attacked his palm-trees also.

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But the maid soon repented of her talkativeness, for when she added that the kind shoe-maker, Anchor, who had brought her those beautiful sandals a few days before had also fallen a victim to the plague, she was abruptly reproved and commanded to keep silence. But while she was kneeling before Catharine, unloosing her sandals, the latter, in spite of her reproof, referred to the maid's story and inquired whether the pretty young wife of the cobbler had also been stricken down with the plague. The maid replied that she was still living, but that after the corpse of her husband had been removed, they had shut the old mother-in-law and the children up in the house and had barricaded the windows. The aldermen had decreed that this should be done in every case, in order that the pestilence might not work its way into the streets or be transported from place to place by persons not infected.

Food and drink were supplied to the prisoners through an opening in the door. Such regulations, she added, were exceedingly prudent and wise. But she might have spared herself this opinion, for before she had finished Catharine struck her angrily with her foot. She then commanded her maid not to spare the *smegma*,* and to wash her hair out as thoroughly as possible.

This was done, and Catharine herself rubbed her hands and arms with the most passionate eagerness. She then caused water to be poured upon her head again and again, and when she ordered the maid to cease she leaned against the marble, breathless, and apparently exhausted.

In spite of the *smegma* and water she still felt without cessation the pressure of the hot hand upon the crown of her head, and it seemed to her as if her heart was weighed down with an invisible mass of lead.

Her mother, her precious mother!

She had kissed her upon the spot where the plague had come in contact with her head, and with her inner ear she could hear her throat rattling and begging for one drink of water, like the dying man to whose bedside fate had led her. And then—then she saw the servants of the senate come and shut her up with her sick mother in the pestilential house, and the plague standing before her like a terrific, malicious witch, and behind her she could see her constant companion, Death, in all his malignity reaching out after her mother and all those around her and also after herself.

Her arms sunk down by her sides, and though in the morn-

* Our soap, which, however, was only used in a soft condition.

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ing she had felt strong and fearless, she was now oppressed with a feeling of the weakest and most miserable helplessness.

Her challenge had been addressed to a human being, a weak, tender woman, but God and fate had taken Heliodora's place upon the field of conflict.

This thought caused her to shudder, and just as she had gotten out of the bath her mother slipped into the hall and called out:

"Still there, my child? How terribly you frightened me! Is it true that Plotinus's sickness shows the symptoms of the plague?"

"More than that, mother," she rejoined, in a tone of deep melancholy; "he has the plague, and the idea struck me that one ought to take a bath when one has been in an infected house, and you, too, kissed and touched me. Please let them start the fire again, however late it is, and you take a bath too."

"But, my child!" said her mother, laughing; but Catharine gave her no peace until she gave in and promised her to make use of the reservoir in the men's bath-room, which no one had used since the breaking out of the plague.

When Susannah was alone, she smiled gently and gratefully to herself, and as she lay in the bath she raised her hands and heart toward Heaven and prayed for her precious child, who was so tenderly and thoughtfully considerate of her mother's welfare.

Catharine repaired to her chamber after inquiring whether the clothes she had just laid aside had been fed to the flames in the bath furnace.

Midnight had already passed, and still she ordered her maid to attend her and not to retire. She could find no rest. She went out upon the balcony and threw herself into an easy-chair.

The night was hot and sultry. Every house, tree and wall radiated the heat with which it had been saturated during the day. Upon the Nile Street there passed along first a long procession of suppliants, and then followed a funeral cortège, and close upon this a second, both so thickly veiled in clouds of dust that the light of the torches appeared to shine only like coals in the ashes.

Persons who had died of the plague, and who were not permitted to be laid at rest during the day, were being buried. The first funeral procession was Heliodora's, thus it seemed to her overexcited brain, and the other was her own, or—and

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here a chill passed through her whole frame—that of her mother.

The funeral procession moved slowly forward enveloped in its cloud of dust, and stopped before the gate of the cemetery, and the sleigh with the coffin returned empty and with glowing sides; she, however, was not among the mourners, for she had been shut up in the infected house. And when the house was again opened—she saw all this before her eyes as vividly as though it had really been there—she saw in the great hall of the court two heads severed from their bodies: Paula's and Orion's, and she—she was now alone, all alone and forsaken.

Her mother was lying in the cemetery by the side of her father, and who would now inquire after her, who would care for her, who would be her protector? Here she was, like a tree without roots, like a leaf blown into the sea, like a young bird that has fallen out of its nest and is incapable of flying alone in the world. And now for the first time since that night when she had perjured herself, everything that she had learned in school and at church concerning the punishments in hell that had been foretold, preached, and threatened against the wicked came back to her, and she saw before her mind's eye the home of the damned, and the great hot, burning lake of flame wherein murderers, heretics, and false witnesses—

But what was that?

Had hell really thrown open its gates and sent its blazing flame through the parched crust of the earth toward heaven? Had the firmament also been thrown open and scorching heat and black smoke been poured out upon the northern portion of the city?

Terrified, she sprung up, and strained her eyes in the direction of the fearful sight.

It seemed that the whole sky was on fire, and the space between heaven and earth was filled with thick smoke, glowing flames and myriads of flying sparks. It appeared that an annihilating conflagration had taken possession at the same moment of the city and river and starry vault of heaven, and soon all the metallic heralds of the city, that were wont to summon the faithful to church, raised their voices, and upon the quiet street there soon surged a mass of humanity, and the unfrequented road was crowded with thousands of human beings; shrieks, yells and wild commands and cries reached her ears, and amid the confusion of noises she could distinguish the words, "Governor's palace," "Arabs," "Mukaukas," "Orion," "Fire," "Extinguish it," and "Save."

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And now the old gardener called out to her from the lotus-grove below:

"The governor's mansion is on fire, and at this season of drought! Merciful God, protect the city!"

The little humming-bird's knees trembled and gave way, and as she uttered a gentle cry and grasped after a support, two arms received her, arms from which a short while ago she so longed to escape, the arms of her own mother, that mother who had bent over her only child, and, with a tender kiss, had plucked death from her pestilential head.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BURNING OF THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION, AND ORION'S RETURN.

THE governor's mansion, the pride and the ornament of Memphis, the great and wealthy homestead of the oldest and most distinguished family of the land, the last house from which had sprung a long line of illustrious Egyptians whom even the Greeks had deemed worthy to represent the emperor, and to hold offices of the most exalted dignity, the citadel of national life now lay in ashes, and as the giant of the forest, which the tempest has overturned, crushes and destroys in its fall many smaller trees, so the burning of the governor's mansion destroyed a large number of smaller houses.

From the worm-eaten ship of Memphis this night had torn away mast and rudder, and in addition to them many planks. It must be regarded as a miracle that the whole city was not destroyed, and next to the will of God this was most due to the black incendiary himself and his Arabian soldiers.

This deed of ignominy had been commenced and carried out with cool and cunning calculation. During his search of the building Obada had selected places that were advantageous for his purposes, and two hours after sundown, with his own hand, secretly and unobserved, he had started the fire in numerous places. The troops, of which he desired to make use afterward, were kept under arms in Fostat, and when the fire broke out first in the treasury, and subsequently in three other places, they were forthwith brought over and employed in the most skillful manner.

Everything that was of special value contained in this ancient seat of a wealthy family, even the splendid horses in the stables, had been removed to a place of safety; the title-deeds to their landed possessions and slaves and other property were carefully preserved in Fostat, but, nevertheless, the

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flames destroyed a great quantity of things that were invaluable and that could never be replaced. Magnificent works of art, manuscripts and books which were nowhere else to be found, grand and gorgeous trees and plants from every country, utensils, furniture and stuffs, which had been the admiration of connoisseurs, were destroyed in one great mass. But the incendiary cared nothing for these, for with them disappeared all possibility of proving what and how much had fallen into his hands at the downfall of the palace.

If the worst were to happen, and he were to be deposed from his office on account of his high-handed procedure! Of all the cities that he had seen during the robbing expeditions of Islam, none had pleased him so much as Damascus, and now he possessed the means to enjoy the second half of his life in luxurious ease.

It was of the greatest importance to him to see that as little as possible besides the palace was destroyed by the flames; for it would have offered his enemies a most excellent weapon against him if famous old Memphis had been completely destroyed through his fault. And he was the very man to manage the fight with this fearful element.

And in fact not one house in the Nile Street fell a victim to the flames, but the south wind had carried some of the burning materials toward the north-west, and a few houses in the pauper section of the city, on the edge of the desert, had been set on fire. Thither now the chief part of the extinguishing and rescuing force had to turn, and here he managed, as he had done at the palace, on the principle that all must be sacrificed that could not certainly be saved.

Thus a whole quarter of the city became a sacrifice to the flames, hundreds of needy families lost all their property, and yet he, whose ruthless avarice had plunged so many into misery, was honored and praised, for he was first upon the banks of the river and then on the edge of the desert, always where the danger was greatest, where the presence of the commander was most necessary. Here he was seen in the midst of the fire, there he was wielding the ax with his own hand, at one time riding on horseback along the line, where the dry grass was to be dug up and saturated with water, then on foot directing the stream from the miserable water-jets, or hurling back into the flames with herculean strength a beam that had been cast too far out. His shrill voice could be heard above all the rest, and his gigantic figure was conspicuous in the crowd; every eye was fixed upon his black face, with its shining

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eyes and white teeth, and his example served as an incentive to the Arabs.

His commands turned the place of conflagration into a field of battle; fearless of death and ready to exert and to use their strength to the last extreme, the Mussulmen, under this good leadership, and with the name of God and of their prophet upon their lips, performed what was almost incredible. The Egyptians likewise did their best, but, in contrast to the performances of these men, they felt themselves almost powerless, and hardly considered it any longer a disgrace to have been conquered by them.

The reflection from the flames had been visible far, far away, and he, whose rich inheritance was being devoured by the flames, perceived between midnight and morning on the far-off western horizon a reddish glow, the cause of which he could not explain.

He had continued to ride in the direction of the light for a half hour when his caravan made a halt at the next to the last station on the imperial road between Kolzam and Babylon.

A stately number of armed men dismounted from their horses at the same moment with Orion, but he had not summoned them to attend him as a *guard du corps*, but, on the contrary, he had been captured by them, and was now being conducted as a prisoner back to Fostat.

He had been compelled to give up the carriage, of which he had made use up to this time, and to mount a dromedary; two soldiers, armed to the teeth, remained constantly at his side. They left his companions unmolested in their vehicles. Senator Justinus descended from his carriage before the relay-house and called upon his companion, a pale, emaciated man, to do the same, but with a wearied shake of his head he remained seated, and when the old man inquired in tones of affection: "Are you suffering, Narses?" the latter replied in a hoarse, sharp manner: "All over!" and sunk back in the cushions of the carriage. He refused even the refreshments which the senator's servant and interpreter brought him. He seemed to have fallen into a state of absolute indifference and to desire nothing but rest. This was the nephew of Justinus.

The latter had, with the assistance of Orion, and after being provided with safe-conducts and passes by the commander-in-chief of the Arabs, gained his end and ransomed Narses, after the poor fellow had performed compulsory labor upon the new water-way, which the Caliph Omar had caused to be built along the line of the ancient canal of the Pharaohs, for

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the purpose of transporting grain in the shortest possible time from Egypt into Arabia, and then in the rocky harbor of Aila.

On the hot shore of the Red Sea Narses had been forced to carry stones beneath the frightful sun of these latitudes, and several days had elapsed before his uncle had succeeded in finding a trace of him. Alas, in what condition did Justinus find him!

For a whole week before their arrival the former cavalry officer had had his quarters in the miserable huts of the laborers, and his back still bore the marks of the lash with which the overseer had forced the exhausted and suffering men to a fresh exertion of their failing strength.

The handsome soldier had become in mind and body a broken man, a melancholy invalid.

Justinus had hoped to bring back to Martina a happy man restored to his liberty, but now he was conducting to her this wreck of a human being upon the brink of the grave. And yet the senator rejoiced that he had been able to save even this wreck. The sight of the suffering man touched him deeply, and the less appreciation Narses showed the more thankful was Justinus whenever he evinced the slightest sign of active interest in his surroundings. Orion had grown very intimate with the old gentleman during his journey by land and by water, and finally as an assistant nurse of the sick man, and had, at the risk of encountering his disapprobation, disclosed to the senator the ground of his leaving Memphis.

He felt incessantly that all that was great and good in him belonged to Paula, that her love exalted and strengthened him, and that to fall away from her meant his ruin.

This trifling with Heliodora could only result in drawing him away from the high aims of his life, after which he was now striving. He kept these aims constantly before his eyes, and he longed with spiritual hunger for quiet days, in which he might carry out that which he had resolved in the church to pursue, and solve the problem which the general had submitted to him.

The consciousness of being the heir to a stupendous fortune gave him no more pleasure; ay, he had to acknowledge to himself that without this excess of wealth he would have been an entirely different man, and more than once the impulse seized him to cast behind him all that he possessed, to launch forth into the world free and untrammeled, and to gain for himself, by means of his own strength, peace of mind and the respect of the best people.

The senator had received his confessions, as he was forced to

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do, there being no alternative. If Thomas's daughter was what Orion pictured her as being, then in fact there was little hope for his beloved little bird. He and Martina would return home with two pets, but they, the old people, would have to console and support the young people, not the reverse, as it should properly be.

In spite of all this Orion gained his affection more and more every day; for every day, every hour he discovered in him something new and admirable, and found much more in him than he had expected. Torches were burning in the capacious court of the inn, and in the center of this court, beneath a kind of square shed supported by posts and covered with palm branches, stood benches for the weary guests. Here he met Orion once more and could converse with him.

The soldiers had seated themselves near him, and would not let him leave their sight for one moment while they eat their dried mutton, bread, onions and dates.

The senator's servant had brought a luncheon out of the carriage, and as Justinus and his young friend were about to do justice to it, a tall figure entered the court and approached the benches. It was Dr. Philippus, who was taking a rest here on his way to Dschidda. He had already learned before entering the court whom he would here find a prisoner, and the Arabs, to whom the doctor was well known, permitted him to join Orion and Justinus, but they moved nearer to them, and their commander understood Greek.

Philippus was by no means affectionately disposed toward Orion, but he knew what dangers were awaiting the young man, what a terrible loss he had suffered, and his conscience urged him to impart to him everything that might be of service to him in his examination regarding the adventure to which Rufinus had fallen victim.

He was the bearer of sad news, which the Arabs might hear also.

Orion was enraged at the confiscation of the governor's mansion, but he expressed the opinion that Amr, the commander-in-chief, would grant him speedy redress and restore the palace to his possession; on the other hand, he was the more completely overwhelmed at the news that his mother had gone to join his father, and when the Arabs saw this strong man convulsed with sobs, and learned how great a misfortune had befallen him they respectfully withdrew, for the sorrow of a son at the death of his own mother was in their eyes sacred. They regarded one who had lost what was most dear to him as one touched by the hand of the Most High and sanctified by

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such touch, and they showed such a one every consideration in a spirit of pious reverence.

Orion had not observed the withdrawal of the Mussulmen, but Philippus used the opportunity to narrate to him in hasty words all that had occurred during the flight of the nuns.

He himself as yet knew nothing of the burning of the palace nor of the arrest of Paula; he was able, however, to inform the senator where he would find his wife and friends. When the officer in charge summoned him to move forward he had been informed of all that had happened.

The palace—what difference did it make to him whether the Arabs restored it to him or not; but his mother, his beloved mother! Everything, even the minutest, that she had been to him from childhood up now passed before his mind, and in his grief over her loss he forgot the threatening danger, the prison that awaited him, and the shameful invasion of his rights; even the picture of his betrothed faded away before that of his dead mother. Perhaps it would not even be permitted him to attend her funeral!

The road led through parched and rough desert land, and the further they advanced the more brilliant became the strange light before them, until it began to grow light behind them, and the brilliant crimson of the dawn extinguished the light in the west.

Another hot day had begun, and when the rocks upon Orion's road began to cast long shadows, they met some Arabian horsemen coming from Fostat, who hailed Orion's attendants to tell them the latest news. It must be something most important; but the young man did not understand what they said; bad news, however, travels fast, and while the Arabs continued to converse with one another, the interpreter hastened up to him and exclaimed that the governor's mansion had been burned to the ground and that the half of Memphis was in flames.

Then came other travelers on horses and on dromedaries, also wagons, and caravans laden with grain and various articles of commerce, and each and all addressed Orion's company, and informed them of what was going on in Memphis, each hoping to be the first to tell the bad news.

How often Orion heard the same thing, and as often as a traveler commenced with his: "Have you heard?" and pointed to the west, the wound that the first news of the catastrophe had inflicted upon him began to bleed afresh.

How much that was dear to him now lay beneath those

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asnes! How much that could never be replaced had the flames destroyed for him!

What he had during the quiet moments of this journey wished might happen had partially come to pass! The burden of his great possessions, which had hung upon his heels and prevented him from moving without constraint, where was it now? But he did not yet feel free, he did not yet see the road open before him, but in secret he lamented the ruined house of his fathers, his lost home, and a torturing feeling of insecurity took possession of him. No father, no mother, no home! For years he had been entirely independent, but now he felt like a boatman whose boat had lost its rudder.

Before him lay a dungeon and the close of a great tragedy, the hero of which he might consider himself. Fate had given his house up to destruction like that of Tantalus. It had sunk into ashes, and there lay already its victims; two brothers, father, mother, and at a remote distance Rufinus.

But where lay the guilt? His ancestors had been guilty of no crime; it could be none but his own that had brought on these calamities; but was Fate still in existence, that inexorable, iron Destiny in which the ancients believed? Had he not repented, suffered, become reconciled with his Saviour, and was he not prepared to fight against any and all difficulties?

Perhaps he was the hero of the tragedy, but still he wished to show that the fate of a life was no longer determined by blind necessity, but by that which one makes out of one's self, by that after which one strives in fellowship with the Most High.

If he had to succumb it would only be after he had offered determined resistance. He would fight without fear against everything that offered him resistance, he would press forward upon the path that he had marked out for himself, and now his heart began to feel new strength, and it seemed to him that he could see as his guiding star in the sky the example of his father, in imitation of which it behooved him to live or to die. And when he turned his eyes upon earth he found there too something that made it seem worth his while to endure still longer the sorrows of life and to fight the battle to its bitter end: Paula and her love!

The nearer he approached Fostat the more violently and anxiously did his heart beat. Oh, it must be permitted him to see his beloved once more, to clasp her in his arms once more before his end!

It seemed to him that what he had suffered during these last hours had removed and displaced all that separated them from

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each other. He felt that he now possessed the strength to remain worthy of her; ay, were he now to meet Heliodora again he would certainly and assuredly treat her only as he would an affectionate sister.

His attendants conducted him to the house of the Kahdi, but he was attending a council of state, which had been convoked by his enemy, that black knave Obada. The latter, after the great exertions of the last night, had allowed himself only a few hours of rest, and had then to attend the council, and in the midst of this council he was destined to discover that he had as many enemies to resist as it numbered members.

His bitterest enemies were Kahdi Othman, who was in charge of the department of justice and of general matters of administration, and the secretary of the department of revenue, Chalid. Neither of the two was reserved in expressing his opinions, and no one who had seen this assembly would have ever supposed that the majority of its members had in their youth during times of peace watched their flocks as faithful shepherds upon the mountains, had conducted caravans through the desert, or had followed the smaller trades. In the struggles of tribe against tribe ample opportunity had been afforded them to become skilled in the use of arms and to cultivate courage, but who had instructed them in the choice of words and to accompany them with gestures whose natural charm might have done honor to any Greek rhetorician? It was only when the speaker indulged in "thunder and lightning" that he lost, in the passionate excitement of the moment, his charming moderation, but even then what a powerful impression did the voice, eye and movement of the hands make! And never, not even in the moment of intensest excitement, were they guilty of any offense against purity of language. These speakers, of whom scarcely one could read and write, had an extensive command over the most powerful verses of their poets, thousands of such verses being at their fingers' ends.

To-day the interior interests of this land of ancient civilization, which only a few years before had been unknown to these warlike sons of the desert, were being discussed. And how grandly had the commissioners of public works, the superintendent of the markets, the superintendent of the irrigation of the land, and the superintendent of mills conceived the problem presented to them. These fresh and vigorous minds were capable of grasping the most difficult things and of executing them vigorously, minutely, and successfully.

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And in fact these sons of untrained and uneducated fathers were well adapted to lend rich glory to powerful states that were on the decline, and to awaken to new life the dormant science of nations that had been subdued by them.

Everything in this assembly showed spirit, life and fire, and the former slave Obada found it no easy task to assert his position among these grave scions of free and respected tribes. Kahdi Othman openly and without fear expressed his disapproval of Obada's procedure, and declared in his own name and that of the other members of the divan, that all responsibility for what had occurred must be assumed by Wekil Obada; he, however, for his part, asked nothing better, spoke with such burning fluency; his proposition that all the citizens of Memphis who had been left by the fire without shelter should be brought over to Fostat, was so acceptable, and finally the last night had placed in such a brilliant light his noble characteristics, that proceedings against him were deferred, and they concluded to await an answer from Medina to the complaint that had been made against him. Their severe discipline also required them to submit to his authority, and many of them, who had hastened to meet death like a beloved bride, trembled before this mighty upstart, who did not shrink even from what was most barbarous. Obada had won the victory. No one could prove him guilty of the robbery of even one drachma, but he had been forced to listen to words that had been hard to bear, and on all sides the respect that was due him as the representative of the vicegerent had been withheld from him.

In the highest degree exasperated he was left alone in the council-chamber, and no one, not even his adjutant, remained with him to speak to him a complimentary word upon the force and beauty of his speech, while upon similar occasions these accursed fellows would swarm around Amr like bees and follow him to his house like fawning curs. He ascribed this disrespect and enmity not to a knowledge of his guilt, but to an aversion that was inspired in these proud freemen by his birth, and yet he was superior to them all, felt that the advantage was his, and if his plan in Medina was successful, then he would select among them his own victims, then—

These thoughts of revenge were interrupted by a messenger, who was covered with dust from head to foot. He brought good news: Orion had been captured and had been conducted to the house of the Kahdi.

"Why not to me?" thundered Obada to the soldier. "Who is the representative of the commander here? Othman or I? Bring the prisoner to my house!"

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With these words he repaired forthwith to his house, but instead of the prisoner there appeared one of Kahdi's officers, who, in the name of his master, reported to Obada that the caliph had made Kahdi chief justice in Egypt, that this matter was under his jurisdiction, and that if Obada desired to see the prisoners he would be kind enough to repair to his house, or else later to the city jail of Memphis, whither he proposed to have Orion transferred.

Thereupon Obada, in the greatest rage, hastened to the house of his enemy, which was near by, but Kahdi met his stormy fierceness with the self-possession of a prudent and upright man. He was between forty and fifty years of age, but his soft black beard had already begun to turn slightly gray. His noble brown face bore the stamp of a distinguished and lofty character, and his eyes showed signs of a penetrating but quiet mind. There lay in the whole appearance of the man something peaceful and positive. He had borne life's heaviest blows with dignity, and was now striving, as far as he could, to spare others the same experiences. The accusations of the patriarch had reached Kahdi also, and he was inclined to resent severely the murder of his fellow Mussulmen, but the punishment must be inflicted only upon the guilty, and it would have caused him sorrow to believe that Orion was guilty, for he had honored his father as a brave man and a just judge, and had himself received many a piece of good advice from the experienced Egyptian. The meeting which now took place between him and the excited Wekil was painful even to the officers who witnessed it, and Orion, who in the next room could hear the fierce vituperation of Obada, perceived with what bitter enmity his dusky opponent pursued him.

But just as the sea even after the most frightful storms gradually subsides into its accustomed ebb and flow, so this conflict also had a quiet ending. Kahdi represented to Wekil what an unheard-of thing it was, and what a disgraceful light it cast upon the justice of the Mussulmen, upon the ground of a mere suspicion to have plundered of its property the most respected house of the land, to the head of which the cause of Islam was indebted for much of its success, and Obada had replied that well-defined charges had been presented by the supreme head of the Church of the land, that the noble family had been robbed of nothing, but that their property had simply been seized by the government and transferred to a place of safety; that no human being could be responsible for what Allah destroyed by his fire.

Of a mere suspicion there could be no question in the matter;

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he himself had in his possession a document which proved in black and white that the betrothed of Orion had been the instigator of the crime that had cost the lives of twelve of their fellow Mussulmen. The young woman of whom he spoke had been arrested yesterday. He proposed to examine her later in spite of all the Kahdis in the world; for if he, Othman, proposed to allow so great a number of Mussulmen to be murdered by these dogs of Christians unavenged, he, Obada, could not let it pass unnoticed, and if he were to do so, to-morrow the thousand Egyptians at work upon the canal would murder with their spades and picks the three Mussulmen who were superintending them. In reply to these statements Kahdi declared that he was no less anxious to punish those that were guilty than Obada, but that it must first be ascertained who the guilty ones were, and that this must be done according to law, justly and without fear of men and blind hatred, according to regular legal procedure and with all possible prudence. To acquit those that are guilty offended his conscience as a judge as severely as to punish those that are guiltless, and consequently the investigation must go quietly on. If he, Obada, desired to examine Orion's betrothed, he had no objection to make; on the other hand it was his duty to conduct the legal proceedings and to preside over the meetings of the judges, and this authority he would not allow himself to be deprived of even by the caliph as long as he considered him worthy of holding the office.

Obada was compelled to express himself, however unwillingly, as satisfied, and as Wekil desired to see Orion he was summoned. The black giant examined him like a slave whom one desires to purchase, from head to foot, and as Kahdi advanced toward the door, and consequently could not see him, Obada was unable to resist a boyish trick, and struck a quick, sharp stroke across his swarthy neck with his index finger as though he were severing his head from his body, and in doing so cast an ominous, significant glance at the prisoner. He then turned his back contemptuously upon the young man.

CHAPTER XLI.

WEKIL OBADA CONVERSES WITH PAULA, AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITH ORION.

In the afternoon Wekil Obada rode over to Memphis to visit the city prison. He expected to find the bishop there, but instead of him he received the news that Plotinus had died of the plague.

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That was a malevolent stroke of fate, for with the bishop perished the knowledge of who had betrayed to him the plan for the rescue of the nuns.

But no!

The patriarch assuredly possessed knowledge of the whole affair.

But of what assistance was this fact for the present?

He had no time to lose, and Benjamin was scarcely to be expected back before the lapse of several weeks. Obada had met Paula's father in the battles around Damascus, and it had often piqued him that the name of this warrior hero was mentioned with honor even among the Mussulmen. His ignoble heart begrudged even to the most exalted that pure honor which is acknowledged by both friend and foe. He did not believe in it, and held every one who enjoyed it merely a clever dissembler.

As he hated the father, so he felt an aversion to the daughter, without ever having seen her. In his heart he had sealed Orion's fate, and before his end he had determined to inflict upon him an additional sorrow by the execution of his betrothed, whether she denied or openly confessed her guilt. Perhaps he might succeed in effecting this, and so he caused Paula to be conducted without delay into the council-chamber of the judges; but his design failed completely, although he promised her through the interpreter the utmost leniency if she would be outspoken, and if not, declared that she should suffer the most horrible death. He had not expected to find such a prisoner, and the proud composure with which she repelled every charge exercised a strange influence over this former slave.

At first he had attempted to assist the intrepreter by screaming at her in broken Greek, or by attempting to terrify her by those fierce glances whose power he had often made proof of against his subordinates, but without the slightest effect; and finally he caused the interpreter to declare to her that he had in his possession a document which proved her guilt beyond the shadow of a doubt; but even this did not disturb her composure in the least, and she merely asked to see it. He then declared to her that she would see it time enough, and accompanied the explanation of the interpreter with threatening gestures.

He had met among his own people clever and influential women. He had seen brave women enter the battle at the side of the men, and share the dangers of the struggle for their faith with more blood-thirstiness and with greater indifference

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to death than the male warriors, but these women were all wives and mothers, and where he had seen them break through the quiet circle of their families, outside of which a young girl could never venture, they had been ruled by passionate excitement, burning partiality and devotion for husband and children, family or tribe. Generally the women among his people kept modestly in the background, and none ever violated this custom unless they were under the influence of stormy passions. But this young girl: she stood before him like the commander of an army, like the head of a tribe in invincible composure. There lay in her behavior something which inspired embarrassment in him, and at the same time caused in him the most intense desire to cause her to feel his power and to break her pride. Just as he excelled all the leaders of the Arabian forces in martial vigor, so she excelled all the women of his people in figure, and impelled by a feeling of curiosity to measure his stature with hers, he approached her, and with his hand he drew an imaginary line from his brown neck through the air till it touched the crown of her head, and when she drew back he did not fail to observe the intense disgust with which she did so. The blood rushed to his head, and as he commanded the interpreter to tell her that she need calculate upon no clemency he condemned her in his heart to a cruel death. Pale and prepared for the worst, Paula had returned to the wretched room occupied by herself and her old Betta.

Her entrance into the prison had been shocking, for the guards had been about to commit her to one of the wards occupied by men and women, criminals in common, and thence greeted them the rattling of chains and a wild medley of coarse voices. However, the interpreter and the chief of the guards had taken upon themselves the responsibility of putting her into a cell where she might be alone with her nurse.

This was doubtless due to the kind offices of Dame Martina, who had promised them a handsome reward if they should bring her news on the following day that Paula had received kind treatment and agreeable quarters in the prison.

The mother-in-law of the keeper of the jail had likewise taken her under her protection. She was the hostess of the inn of Nesptah, and had recognized in the prisoner the beautiful girl who had accompanied Orion upon his pleasure trip on the river the day he visited her inn, and whom she had taken for his betrothed. She was accidentally paying her daughter, the wife of the jailer, a visit, and persuaded her likewise to be kind to Paula. Accordingly she and Betta had received a cell

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to themselves, and her gold pieces pleased the jailer exceedingly.

This man henceforth did his best to alleviate her misfortunes, and this morning he had even permitted Pulcheria to visit her and to bring her the last roses from her garden which had not yet been parched by the sun.

The widow Susannah also had, in accordance with her principles, sent her fruits and various other articles of food, but they were turned over to the jailer, and the messenger was informed that she was provided with everything, and for the future would not stand in need of such things.

Conscious of her innocence, she had looked forward to her fate with calmness, and had relied upon the far-famed justice of the Arabian judges. But it seemed that not they, but Orion's enemy, that black fiend, was to determine her fate, and now her heart sunk within her, oppressed by the feeling that she was to fall a victim to the whim of a conscienceless scoundrel, and was powerless and helpless. She could scarcely listen to the encouraging words of her old attendant.

She was not afraid of death, but to die without having seen her father once more, without showing and proving to Orion that she was and remained his, wholly his, this was too hard to bear. While she was wringing her hands upon the brink of despair he who had caused destruction to the happiness, peace and property of so many of his fellow-beings was riding at a furious pace upon one of the noblest animals from Orion's stables through the streets of Memphis, with the firm determination of causing the obstinate lady prisoner to feel his power.

He was forced to bring his steed into a quieter pace when he reached the spacious market-place in the Ta-auch quarter, for before the *curia*, the city hall of Memphis, there had assembled an immense crowd of people, and Wekil, regardless of the results, forced his way through the mass; he knew what they desired and paid no heed to them. For some time these poor people had collected there daily and demanded from the city councilors assistance in their frightful distress. Since their prayers and their processions had failed yesterday they began to-day to storm the *curia*. But could the senate cause the Nile to rise, the plague to cease its ravages, and the dates to stop falling from the trees? Could the senate give assistance when Heaven itself had refused its aid?

The mayor of the city from the terrace of the city hall had already repeatedly asked these questions of those who were de-

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manding help, and each time the masses had broken out into the cry:

"Yes, yes, you must; it is your duty! You make us pay taxes, it is your duty to care for us!"

Yesterday it had already become almost impossible to restrain the senseless people, and they had pelted the city hall with stones; but to-day, after the fearful conflagration and the death of the bishop, they had again assembled in unheard-of numbers, more angry and more desperate than ever, and the city fathers sat trembling upon their old gilded seats, the remnants of departed grandeur, which were intended to be like the seats of the old Roman senators, looked at each other with an expression of hopeless indecision upon their faces, and caused a communication which had just been received from Kahdi to be read aloud to them. It commanded them, the Christians, in pursuance of a decree that had been made in accordance with Obada's proposition, to make known to the public by criers and public advertisement that every one whose house had been destroyed by the fire of the previous night would receive gratuitously in Fostat a building lot, garden and building materials to build himself a new house in case he were willing to move across the river and to accept Islam.

This disgraceful proposition had to be made public, and consultation and resistance were alike of no avail.

But what could they for their part do for the discontented people?

The plague was decimating the unfortunate beings; the vegetables, the half of their means of livelihood at this season of the year, were parched up; their water, usually so sweet and refreshing, was poisoned; the dates, which served them for meat, ripened only to be thrown away in disgust. Added to all, the comet was still visible in the heavens, and there was no hope of a harvest even of one blade in the future moons. The bishop dead, confidence in the assistance of the Church gone, God's grace, as it were, extinguished, lost in a land that had fallen into the hands of infidels. And they, upon whose help they had reckoned, poor, weak people, counselors without counsel, every hour likely to follow their colleagues who had been seized with the plague, and who had so recently spoken from their now empty chairs words full of self-confidence. Yesterday every one had been firmly convinced that the misery and want they were suffering had reached its climax, and last night it had fallen upon so many with double force.

Their own self-reliance was exhausted, but there was still one

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wise man in the city who might perhaps open up new paths or point to yet untried means to save the people from despair.

And now stones again began to fall through the open roof, and the senators sprung from the ivory chairs and sought safety behind the marble columns and pillars. Wild noises reached the anxious fathers of the city from the direction of the market, and the heavy, massive door of the *curia* groaned with blows from sticks and fists. Fortunately the door was faced with bronze, and was made fast with heavy iron bars, but it seemed that at any moment it might be burst open, and then the mad rabble would rush pell-mell into the assembly room.

But what was that?

For a moment the howling and yelling ceased, and then it began again, but in a milder and more subdued form.

Instead of the savage curses and oaths that had been heard before, there rang forth now again and again the sound of "Hail! Hail!" and in the intervals: "Save, help us! Give us your counsel!" "Long live the wise man!" "Your magic art, father!" "You know the secrets, and are acquainted with the wisdom of the ancients!" "Save us, save us! show these money-bags and deceivers in the *curia* how they ought to help us!"

Thereupon the president of the senate ventured to leave his position of security behind the statue of the Emperor Tragar, the only one which the ecclesiastics had spared, and to ascend the ladder which was used for lighting the chandeliers, and to peer down through the large window. And there he saw a gray-headed old man clothed in shining white linen, riding a beautiful white ass through the crowd, which reverentially made way for him. He was preceded by the *lictors* of the city with their *fasces*, upon which, as a sign of their peaceful mission, were fastened palm-branches, and the spying senator observed also that besides the driver of his ass another slave followed the old man, and that he bore several parchment rolls, and the sight of these gave him fresh hope, for they looked very old and time-worn, and contained, therefore, doubtless a mass of wisdom, ay, perhaps even magical formulæ and effective enchantments.

With a loud "He is coming!" the president of the senate descended the ladder, and soon the door opened, the iron bolt rattled, and with a deep-drawn breath they perceived that no one had forced his way into the *curia* with the old man.

When Horus Apollo entered the senate chamber he found the senators seated in their ivory chairs in as dignified a position

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as if they had never interrupted their consultations; but at a sign from the president they all arose before the old man, and he responded to their salutation in a suitable manner, as though it were his due to receive such an honor. He made no objection on the other hand when the president vacated his seat of honor in his favor and took a seat at his side upon one of the ordinary senatorial chairs. The consultation was soon opened, and it was not disturbed by the people, although from the market-place there proceeded a sound like the noise of breaking waves and the hum of thousands of swarms of bees pouring incessantly into the council-chamber.

He modestly declared that he, in his simplicity, had serious doubts that he would be able to find help where men of such wisdom had failed to do so; that he was only experienced in the knowledge and arts of his fathers, and that he had come to inform them of and to recommend for their imitation what they under similar circumstances would have considered advisable.

A murmur of approval accompanied his gentle but fluent words, and when the president of the senate first drew attention to the root of all evil, the failure of the Nile to overflow, the old man interrupted him, and requested them first to direct their attention to those evils against which it behooved them to fight with their own strength.

The plague was in possession of the city, and he had just passed by that quarter which had been ruined by the fire, and had there seen fifty sick persons together dying without assistance and in misery. Here something could be done, here a means presented itself to show the excited people that their counselors and leaders were not holding their hands idly in their laps.

Thereupon one senator moved that the vacant Convent of St. Cecilia, or the disused and decaying Odeum be used for this purpose, but Horus Apollo opposed him, and explained with great clearness that such a herd of infected persons in the midst of the city endangered those who were well. This was the opinion of his friend Dr. Philippus, and he had indorsed the custom of the fathers as the only proper one. And whither were the fathers wont to transfer not only their charitable institutions, but also the temples and cemeteries with all the extensive appurtenances belonging thereto? Always into the desert outside of the city. The famous Arrian himself had written upon the giant sphinx near the pyramids these lines:

> "The gods once created forms towering on high,
> For grain wisely saving the fields that low lie."

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This sparing of the productive land had been forgotten by recent generations, and they were also ignorant of how to make use of the desert land. The dead and infected should not be allowed to jeopardize the living and sound, and therefore they should be cared for outside of the city within the confines of the desert.

"But we can not let them lie out there exposed to the scorching rays of the sun!" exclaimed the president of the senate.

"And on the other hand," added another senator, "we can not by a mere turn of the hand erect a house for them."

Then Horus Apollo rejoined:

"Who would be so foolish as to demand either of these alternatives from you! But there is a superabundant quantity of canvas and posts in Memphis. Cause forthwith large tents to be built in the Necropolis, and underneath their kindly shade let all be cared for under the supervision and at the expense of the city. Appoint three or four of your number to carry out this proposition, and in a few hours all those who are sick and without shelter will be provided for. How many sailors and ship-builders are now loafing along the banks of the river without employment! Call them to your aid, and let the work begin within an hour."

This proposition met with hearty approval, and a manufacturer of linen among the senators exclaimed:

"I will supply what you need!" But another, who was engaged in the manufacture of the same commodity, and exported this famous Egyptian staple to distant lands, interrupted him and demanded the contract of supply for himself and his house, because he could furnish it more cheaply. And this contention would have taken the whole time of the present meeting and perhaps that of the meeting of the next day had not the suggestion of Horus Apollo, that the order be divided equally between the two, been promptly accepted.

The people greeted the publication of the resolution of the senate to erect hospital tents in the desert with countless cries of approval. The chosen commissioners immediately set to work, and by night those who were infected with the pestilence and were without shelter would be provided for beneath the first large hospital-tent.

In similar manner the old man solved several other important questions, always having reference in doing so to the ancients. Finally he turned to the discussion of the great and weighty question of the Nile, and did so with the utmost prudence and diplomacy.

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All the events of the immediate past he declared pointed to the fact that Heaven was angry with the unfortunate land of his fathers. As a sign of its displeasure it had sent the comet, that fearful constellation, which was each day increasing in its threatening brilliancy.

It was in the power of no mortal to cause the Nile to rise, but the fathers had—and now the senators listened with breathless attention—the fathers had stood in more intimate relations with the secret powers of nature, under control of which all life stands, than men of the present day, be they laymen or priests. In those days every servant of the Most High was a natural philosopher and a student of nature at the same time, and when upon former occasions a calamity such as this of the present year visited Egypt they had offered up a sacrifice, a most difficult sacrifice, against which humanity and also every feeling of his own heart rebelled, but this sacrifice had never failed to have its effect, never, no, never. "Here are the proofs," and he pointed to the parchment-rolls in his lap; but the senators moved uneasily upon their chairs, and first the president, then the other senators one after the other inquired:

"The sacrifice!"

"What sacrifice did they offer?"

"What had the sacrifice to do with it? Tell us!"

"Permit me to be silent upon that subject until another time," requested the old man. "Of what assistance can it be to you to explain it to you to-day? It behooves us first to determine what is pleasing to the gods."

"What is it?" "Speak, sir!" "Do not put us to the rack!" they stormed from all sides upon him; but the old man remained inexorable, promised to call the senate together himself as soon as the proper season had come, and he commanded the president of the senate to proclaim from the portico of the *curia* that Horus Apollo knew of a sacrifice that would at last influence the Nile and cause it to rise. As soon as the sacrifice could be found the consent of the people would be requested. In the days of the fathers it had never failed of the desired effect, and so they might all, man, woman and child, return to their houses in contentment, and patiently and with renewed and well-founded hopes look forward to the future.

And this proclamation, into which the chief of the city intertwined expressions of praise concerning the wisdom of the old man, Horus Apollo, had a wonderful effect. The people raised a cry of delight, as though they had already received new life. One "Hail! Hail!" after another might have been heard, and these cries were this time intended not only for the old man

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who had promised to rescue them, but also for the senators, the kind and considerate fathers of the city, and with these cries an immense burden fell from their hearts. What the old man had proposed was of course not pious and exactly Christian, but had the power of the Church showed itself effectual? And after this had failed they themselves had recourse to instrumentalities which the priests had pronounced accursed. Magic and enchantments were truly Egyptian arts, and where faith had borne no good fruits these came forward to demand their rights; superstition claimed for herself recognition; and if they had caused "Medea with the Curls" to be surprised and arrested, it had been done not merely to comply with the law, but rather for the purpose of making use, without its being known, of her mysterious science for the common weal. In times of such distress no means were too bad, and although the old man himself shuddered at the means he proposed, yet he might feel certain of their consent and approval, provided only it would have the desired effect. If the calamity were once put an end to the sin committed might be easily atoned for, and God was so merciful!

The bishop had *ex-officio* a seat and voice in the assembly of senators, and now fate itself had spared them his opposition.

When Horus Apollo entered the market-place, he was greeted with a storm of applause and of gratitude, as though he had already succeeded in saving the people and his country.

What a momentous task had he undertaken! Whether he succeeded or failed in accomplishing that which he proposed to attempt, in no event could he remain in Memphis, for his peace and quiet had certainly already been sacrificed. But that did not frighten him, for it was assuredly best for the ladies that he should take them away from the dangerous vicinity of the capital city, and he had formed the firm determination of taking them away with him. For Philippus, too, it could only prove beneficial to be transplanted into other soil.

He learned at Rufinus's house the fate that had befallen Paula.

For the present she was out of his way, but were they to set her at liberty to-morrow or the next day or even in a month, she would be as much in his way as ever. And so the attack against her must nevertheless be carried out! Its very strangeness proved an incentive to him, and what satisfaction would he not feel if he succeeded in inducing the Egyptian Christians to perform the heathenish act he was about to propose to them!

If Paula were condemned to death by the Arabs it could only

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prove to be helpful in the execution of his designs, and so it behooved him now to put himself in communication with the negro Wekil, for everything depended upon his co-operation.

Johanna and Pulcheria found him more affable and in better spirits than ever before; his proposition to become their house-companion together with Philippus was received even by little Maria with enthusiastic joy, and the ladies began already to show him through the whole house, and lent him the most affectionate and considerate assistance in doing so.

What he there saw pleased him beyond measure. So neat and cleanly could no place have looked where the eyes of women did not keep watch and have control. He was to have Rufinus's room on the ground-floor, the corresponding rooms on the opposite side of the house were to be arranged for Philippus. The dining-room and the vestibule, together with the *viridarium*, were to remain common property, while the upper story offered ample accommodations for the ladies and guests.

He promised to move into his new home as soon as he could arrange a certain something. It must be something most pleasing, for when the old man spoke of it his tightly compressed lips moved backward and forward with an expression of intense joy, and his sparkling eyes seemed to Pulcheria to say:

"For you, too, child. I have something nice stored up in my mind."

CHAPTER XLII.

LOVE SHEDS ITS RAYS UPON THE GLOOM OF THE PRISON.

PAULA passed a most wretched night in the narrow and burning hot prison cell in which she and her maid were confined. She was unable to sleep, and even when she succeeded in closing her eyes once, she was awakened by the cries of the prisoners and the rattling of chains in the large prison rooms, and by the steps of a companion in misery, who in the room above her was walking up and down the floor more restless even than she. Poor fellow-sufferer! Were pangs of conscience driving him in torment hither and thither, or was he innocent as she was, and could find no sleep on account of longing, care and love? He was no common criminal, for the rooms in this part of the prison were never assigned to them, and at midnight, after the noise in the large hall of correction had suddenly ceased, she could hear the sound of a lute pro-

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ceeding from his cell, and the music was that of a master upon the stringed instrument.

She had on interest in the stranger, but she was indebted to his musical genius, for it turned her thoughts away from herself, and with increasing interest she listened to his playing.

Glad of the pretense or excuse for leaving her couch, she sprung up and stood by the only window of her cell, which was made secure with iron bars. Then the music ceased, and there followed a conversation between the jailer and her fellow-prisoner.

What voice was that? Was she deceived or did she hear correctly?

Her heart stood still as she continued to listen, and now, now every doubt must give way. Orion and no other it was who was speaking above her! And now the jailer mentioned his name, and spoke of her deceased uncle, and then they began to talk in an under-tone, as if by a sign. She could hear the whispering, but could no longer understand its meaning. At last she heard audible words of farewell, the door of the cell fell to, and the steps of the prisoner approached the window. She then pressed her face against the warm iron bars, turned it upward, listened out into the silent night and called, as there was nothing stirring, first gently and then louder:

"Orion, Orion!"

And forthwith in response her name was repeated from above.

She then greeted him and began to inquire how and when he had come here; but at the first words he interrupted her with a firm "Keep quiet!" which was followed by a short "Look out!"

In anxious expectancy she listened through the bars, and the minutes were gradually at a snail's pace uniting into a full half hour when at last the sound for which she had been waiting was heard. "Now!"

A few moments later she held in her hands a letter which had been attached to a lute-string weighted down with a piece of wood and let down to her.

There was neither light nor fire in her cell, and the darkness prevented her from reading. So she only called up to him: "Dark!" and immediately thereafter, following his example: "Look out!" As soon as she had selected the two prettiest roses that Pulcheria had brought her and fastened them to the string, in obedience to her joyous "Now!" they were swung up into the air.

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He expressed his gratitude by means of a few chords that were full to overflowing with passion and devotion; then it became quiet, for the jailer had forbidden him to sing or play at night, and he could not afford to lose the favor of this man.

Paula laid herself upon her couch with Orion's letter in her hand, and when she felt the approach of slumber she put the little roll underneath her pillow and soon fell asleep. When they both awoke the next day at sunrise, they had dreamed of each other and welcomed the day with joyous hearts.

Orion had nearly been beside himself when the prison door closed behind him. He would have liked to rend the iron bars asunder and to break or crush the door to atoms, for there is no more loathsome and exasperating feeling for a man than to see himself shut off as though he were a mere brute from the world to which he belongs, and of which he feels the need, in order to obtain what to him makes life worth living, and in order to find persons to appreciate the good he is capable of doing and effecting.

Yesterday the prison had seemed to them, as it were, the antechamber of hell; they had both felt that they were on the brink of despair, but to-day very different feelings filled their hearts. Orion had been visited with one blow after another of destiny, and Paula had looked forward to his return with a heart full of sorrow and apprehension, but to-day she felt perfectly peaceful in spite of the fearful death that was hanging over her head.

The legend narrates of St. Cecilia, who was led from her marriage-feast to the rack, that while she was suffering the tortures of martyrdom she heard ever and anon the sound of heavenly music and the sweet notes of the organ, and how many have had similar experiences! They have found in the midst of the most severe necessity and danger higher happiness than in the midst of the brilliance, splendor, and joys of a bustling life; for that which we call happiness comes, unconcerned about its abiding-place and its surroundings, to those to whom that for which their souls long most intensely seems at last attainable.

What these two had for a long time not felt, a deep inner joy, came to them in prison. Paula, with his letter before her eyes, which he had begun to write while he was in Kahdi's house, and in which he poured out to her his whole heart. Orion, in possession of her roses, upon which he fastened both heart and eyes, and which lay before him as he composed the following verses, which the affable jailer kindly delivered to her.

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They read as follows:

"ORION'S SONG TO THE LYRE.

"Lo! here in the depths of a dungeon I lie,
Bereft of the sunlight, I languish, I die.

"Ah! then came this rose: from its petals' rich red
There streamed radiance lovely as sunbeams e're shed.

"Its fragrant leaves whispered of love's rising star,
More brilliant than Phœbus gone forth in his car.

"Is not the bright ardor with which thy heart glows
As well like the worm that is hid in the rose?

"With day bright about us, how freely breathed we,
The splendor of sunshine seemed paltry to be.

"Since darkness has come, though, and shadows enfold,
We hail the sun's light as a blessing untold.

"And as from earth's lap precious seeds spring to light,
Or from the dark grave the freed soul takes its flight,

"Enraptured I see from the dungeon's deep gloom,
That fairest of visions, the rose of love bloom."

And never had Paula perhaps been more intensely happy than in the hour when she enjoyed this greeting from her beloved one, this modest prison-flower. Old Betta could not hear this poem often enough, and she wept for joy, not over its contents, but over the wonderful change that it effected in her darling. She had again become the beaming, bright girl she used to be on the slopes of Lebanon, and when Paula appeared before the judges collected in the hall of justice they stared at her in amazement, for they had never before seen a woman who was on trial for her life appear before the bar with eyes beaming with such joy.

But nevertheless she was in a most precarious position, and the heart of the mild and just Kahdi, who himself possessed beloved daughters, shuddered at the false confidence that apparently filled the soul of this magnificent young woman.

Ay, she was in a very precarious situation, for there was a document presented against her of the most damaging nature, and the composition of the trial court, which had been formed in the strictest conformity with the law, seemed very unfavorable for her. Her trial was to be conducted by a court composed of an equal number of Arabs and Egyptians. The former had been called because through her action and agency

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Mussulmen had lost their lives, and as a resident of Memphis and a Christian she was under the jurisdiction of the former.

Kahdi conducted the proceedings, and experience had taught him that his Jacobite colleagues would enter the hall of justice with the sentence of death concealed in the folds of their garments as soon as it appeared that the accused was of the Melchite confession.

What special cause of enmity they had against this lovely creature he did not know, but it was easy to see that they were inimical to the Damascus girl, and if they declared her guilty, and were supported by only two of the Arabian judges, all hope for the young woman was gone.

And what object had that old man, all clothed in white, in appearing upon the witness stand, old Horus Apollo, with a statement which he wished to make? The glances with which he measured the young girl foreboded no good to her cause. And it was so oppressively, so insufferably hot in the court-room! Every one felt burdened, and in spite of the great importance of the proceedings they frequently came to a halt and then again were pushed forward with unbecoming haste.

The accused herself seemed fortunately entirely fresh and unaffected by the intolerable heat of the day. It cost her very little effort in her examination by the rude negro to adhere firmly to the affirmation that she had played no part in the flight of the nuns, but she found it hard to do so in reply to the kind interrogatories of Kahdi Othman; but she had no choice, and she succeeded in proving that when the Arabs lost their lives on the road between Athribis and Dumiat she had been in Memphis and had not left the house of Rufinus. Kahdi immediately attempted to turn this circumstance in her favor, and Wekil Obada, who was constantly conversing with his neighbor on the bench, permitted him to talk without interruption, but as soon as he had finished he arose and laid before the judges the letter which he had found in Orion's room.

It was indisputably in the handwriting of the governor's son, was addressed to Paula, and the concluding sentence: "Do not therefore condemn me; your noble and only too justifiable wish, to be of some assistance to your fellow-believers, would have been sufficient," did not fail to make a deep impression upon the judges. Paula, however, said in reply to Kahdi's question as to what connection she had with this writing, as was the fact, that it was totally unknown to her, but that she would not deny that she had always been most kindly disposed toward the sisters in the cloister of St. Cecilia, her fellow-be-

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levers, and had hoped that they would succeed in maintaining their rights against the unjustifiable attacks of the patriarch.

The deceased Mukaukas and the Jacobite counselor of the city had shared these views of hers, and the Arabs had never disturbed the peace of these pious nurses of the sick.

The calmness and brevity with which she made these statements had a favorable effect, especially upon the Mussulman judges, and Kahdi began to entertain hopes for Paula, and ordered that Orion be summoned, as he was best able to impart information touching the meaning of the writing which he had composed but had never sent off.

Thereupon the young man appeared, and although he and Paula did their utmost to preserve their composure, still every one observed the excitement that this meeting caused in both of them. Horus Apollo did not take his eyes off Orion, whom he now saw for the first time, and his features assumed every moment a more somber and threatening aspect.

The young man admitted that he had written the letter, but he, too, as Paula had done, declared that it had reference only to the dangers that for a long time had threatened the nuns on the part of the patriarch. The assistance which he had promised the daughter of Thomas in this writing he would willingly and zealously have offered on behalf of the sisters at a later and more opportune season, with the assistance of the vicegerent Amr, who, as he himself would testify, shared the opinions of his father regarding the well-founded right of the nuns.

Thereupon the old man upon the witness bench murmured loud enough to be understood by the judges:

"Clever, very clever!" and the negro who sat next to him laughed aloud and exclaimed:

"I call this a cunning prolongation of his life! Take warning, your honors! These two are playing a common game, and are intimately associated with each other. I hold the proof of the fact in my hand: This gentleman controls and invests the property of the daughter of Thomas as though it were his own, and further—"

Here Paula interrupted him. She did not know what this wickedly disposed man was about to say, but it must be something damaging of course. And there stood Orion before her, just as she had been wont to think of him in moments of tender recollection, and she felt how lovingly his eyes rested upon her.

To approach him and tell him all that she had felt in this battle for life and death seemed impossible, and as Wekil was

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now about to unveil before the judges what concerned her and her betrothed alone, her whole soul urged her to anticipate him and to freely bestow upon her friend in this hour of terror all that she had once pusillanimously denied him.

Accordingly she had interrupted the negro with heart full of joy and her eyes beaming, and exclaimed: "Stop! you are wasting words and trouble. That which you deceitfully are attempting to prove I admit with joy and pride. Hear, then, all of you: the son of the Mukaukas George is my betrothed!"

Her eyes then sought those of Orion, and she found them, and once more amid the most terrible dangers these two enjoyed a moment of the purest, deepest love, and Paula's eyes sparkled with tearful emotions of gratitude when Orion exclaimed:

"You have heard out of her own mouth that which makes the highest happiness of my life. The noble daughter of Thomas is my promised bride!"

At these words a murmur passed along the row of Jacobite judges. Many of them had up to this time sat dreamily engrossed in thought, oppressed by the heat, and with heads sunk low upon their breasts; but now they all suddenly became wide awake and full of life as though a stream of cold water had been thrown upon them, and one of them exclaimed:

"Your father, young man, you have grossly forgotten him! What would he have said to this your ignominious union with a Melchite woman, the daughter of those who made martyrs of your two brothers? Oh, if the deceased—"

"He blessed our union upon his dying bed," said the young man, interrupting him.

"Did he?" inquired another Jacobite, with cutting sarcasm. "Then the patriarch was right in denying his corpse the attendance of the clergy. Must one grow old to become a witness of such sacrilege?"

These words sounded to the ears of these intensely happy young people like the chirpings of a cricket; they felt, they thought only of the happy moments they were enjoying, and did not suspect that Paula's confession was equivalent to her death sentence.

The anger of the Jacobites expedited from this time on the course of the proceedings.

The Arabian prosecutor represented in eloquent terms the lives of how many Mussulmen the rescue of the nuns had cost, and again read Orion's letter aloud. His Christian associate upon the bench endeavored to prove that this writing could only have reference to the so cunningly devised flight of the

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sisters, and then something unexpected was brought to the attention of the judges that made a deep incision into the proceedings; the old, gray-headed man interrupted Kahdi for the purpose of deposing.

Then Paula's courage began to revive, for the last speeches had caused it greatly to fail; she felt certain that the tried friend and adoptive father of her faithful Philippus would defend her. But what was the fact? With a look, the ferocious hostility of which penetrated her inmost heart, the old man measured her imposing figure, and then said, with much deliberation:

"On the morning of the day of the escape of the nuns the accused was in the Convent of St. Cecilia and there tolled the bells. If you can, proud daughter of a prefect, contradict me; but let me say to you in advance that if you do you will only compel me to make new accusations against you."

At these words the young girl, overwhelmed with terror, saw in her imagination Rufinus's widow and Pulcheria upon the prisoner's bench before the judges, and she felt that by contradicting the old man she would plunge her friends also into the abyss which yawned before her, and so she confirmed with trembling lips the accusation of Horus Apollo.

"And for what reason did you toll the bell?" inquired Kahdi.

"For the purpose of aiding those who are my fellow Christians and whom I love," replied Paula.

"As the promoter of a treasonable and bloody undertaking," exclaimed Wekil, "and for no other purpose than to deceive us, the rulers of this land."

But Kahdi called him to order, and gave the floor to the attorney for the defense. The latter had had a consultation with her early in the morning, and according to the Egyptian practice appeared with a brief in her defense; but this dull, perfunctory document had no effect whatever, and although Kahdi made every effort to bring forward prominently everything that could be said in her defense, the verdict of "Guilty" was pronounced upon her.

But could her crime be punished with death?

It had been proven that she had been implicated in the rescue of the nuns, but it had also been proven with no less certainty that during the fight on the arm of the Nile she had been far from the sisters and their protectors. And further she was a woman, and how pardonable did it seem that a pious young woman should attempt to render assistance to her persecuted fellow-believers.

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Kahdi Othman brought all this to the attention of his associates in eloquent words, and called Wekil to order with severity when he attempted from the witness bench to argue in favor of sentence of death, and the humane eloquence of the gentle judge won the hearts of most of the Arabs. Paula's personality had a powerful effect upon them, and no less the circumstance that the father of the accused had been their bravest and noblest enemy.

When finally the vote was taken the unheard-of result of the same was that all the fellow Christians of the accused, Jacobite Christians, demanded her death, while of all the infidels upon the bench of justice only one voted for this severe measure of punishment.

Judgment was pronounced, and as Wekil Obada passed Orion, who, pale and scarcely able to walk, was conducted back into his cell, he exclaimed in a tone of biting sarcasm, in broken Greek:

"To-morrow will be your turn, son of the Mukaukas!"

And then the answer:

"Yours shall come too, son of a slave!" trembled upon Orion's lips.

But Paula was standing opposite to him, and in order not to exasperate her enemy to a still greater degree, he succeeded in doing what before he would never have been able to do. Without answering a single word, he allowed Wekil and Horus Apollo to pass by unnoticed.

As soon as the door had closed behind them Kahdi made a sign of approbation to Orion, and said:

"You acted correctly and prudently, my friend! The eagle must not forget that it is wise to move its wings within a cage in a different manner from that in which it moves them when soaring between heaven and earth."

He then gave the sign to the guards to conduct him forth, and considerately remained in the background while the young man bade his betrothed farewell with his hand and eyes.

At length Kahdi approached Paula, whose heroic composure at the announcement of her death sentence had excited his admiration, and said:

"The court has decided against you, noble young lady, but above its judgment stands the mercy and clemency of our master, the caliph, and that of a pitying God. Direct your prayers to him, to the caliph. I will make supplication for you, assisted by some of my friends."

She modestly expressed to him her gratitude, and as she too

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was led away he exclaimed to his friends who were awaiting him, in the picturesque language of his people:

"My heart pains me! The passing of such a sentence oppresses me like a heavy weight; but the earth itself could not be heavier than to have a man like Obada one's fellow-believer and superior."

CHAPTER XLIII.

WEKIL OBADA AND HORUS APOLLO MATURE THEIR FIENDISH SCHEME.

SCARCELY had the old man left the hall of justice in company with Wekil Obada when he requested the latter for an audience. Obada ruthlessly drove the jailer with his wife and infant out of their room, and here caused the old man to disclose to him what manner of death he proposed for the condemned woman, and the old man's plan pleased the negro, but it appeared to him in many respects so bold that the old man would hardly have succeeded in obtaining Obada's consent had he not been able to render him a counter service that was of the greatest importance to him.

It was of the utmost importance to Wekil to prove conclusively that Orion had had a hand in the rescue of the nuns, and chance had placed in the old man's hands a writing that put the fact beyond a shadow of a doubt.

His removal to the house of Rufinus had been begun in the cool morning hours before sunrise. He had upon the first trip carried with him only the most valuable and most important of his manuscripts, and while he was laying these away in a small desk, the same which Rufinus had placed at the service of Paula, Horus Apollo had found in this desk the note that the young man had hastily written when, after waiting in vain a long time for Paula, who was occupied with the sorrows of poor little Maria, he had been compelled to leave in order to go across the river and take leave of the commander Amr.

This wax tablet, upon which the writing had become very indistinct and in part wholly illegible, would convince the judges beyond all possibility of doubt of Orion's guilt, and so by the procurement of this document the old man obtained Obada's consent to determine the kind of death to be inflicted upon the condemned Damascus girl.

When at length they both withdrew from the jailer's room, the negro once more turned to the prison-master and said to

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him with a fierce snarl, while he pointed to his pretty wife with her infant upon her bosom:

"All three of you shall be put to death if you permit Orion to leave his cell, even for one moment."

With these words he threw himself into his saddle, while the old man rode straightway to the *curia* for the purpose of having the mayor call a meeting of the senate for that evening, and then he betook himself to his new home.

There he found his room carefully shaded, and as cool as it could possibly be during such heat. The floor had been sprinkled with water, flowers had been placed in every possible niche and corner, and all the manuscripts and other things that had arrived had been carefully laid away in drawers and in other repositories. Not a particle of dust to be seen, and on all sides a pleasing perfume that was most agreeable to his very sensitive nose. What an excellent exchange he had made!

Seated in his old accustomed arm-chair he rubbed his dry hands together with a feeling of satisfaction, and when little Maria came to call him to supper it afforded him the greatest pleasure to joke with her.

Pulcheria escorted him from the *viridarium* into the dining-room, and he relished the meal, and his wrinkled, ill-natured face assumed a very attractive expression as he looked around upon his female companions, of whom only Eudoxia, the Greek, was not present, who was confined to her room by a slight indisposition. He had pleasant things to say to each one, and without any feeling of constraint, and without repressing any of the gratitude that filled his heart, he began to compare his former and his present condition; he pictured with a roguish look at Pulcheria how pleasant it would be if Philippus would return, in order to constitute them altogether a real and genuine constellation; for every Egyptian star has five rays; the ancients never painted one otherwise, nor carved a different one in stone, in fact they had made use of such a one to write the figure five.

Thereupon little Maria exclaimed:

"But then, then we shall be a six-rayed star, for by that time poor Paula will be with us again!"

"God grant it!" sighed Johanna. Pulcheria, however, asked the old man whether anything was the matter with him, for his face had changed its expression and she felt anxious.

His vivacity had disappeared, he raised his eyebrows, and he seemed to open his compressed lips with much difficulty, when he at last said:

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"Nothing is the matter with me. However, let it be said once for all, this name is hateful to me."

"Paula?" inquired Maria, with amazement. "Oh, if you only knew—"

"I know more than enough," interrupted the old man. "I love you all, every one of you; my old heart receives new strength in your midst; I am happy with you; I am fond of you, am grateful to you; every kindness that you show me does me good, for it comes from the heart; if I could only return it right soon and in abundance I would grow young again from joy. You ought to believe me, and I see by your looks that you do. But," and now his eyebrows again contracted, "but when I hear this name mentioned, and if you attempt to win me over to this woman, or if you ever pour her praises into my ears, then, however painful it would be for me, I must return whence I came."

"But, Horus, Horus, what does all that mean?" exclaimed Johanna, deeply troubled.

"It means," continued the old man, "that there is personified in her everything that I despise and hate in her class. It means that she carries within her bosom a cold and treacherous heart, that she has destroyed for me days and nights, in brief, that I would rather be condemned to live beneath the same roof with slimy snails and cold serpents—"

"Than with her, than with Paula?" said Maria, interrupting him, and with these words the excited child sprung up, and her eyes began to flash, and her voice trembled as she continued: "And you not only say it, but you mean it seriously? Can it be possible?"

"Not only possible, but certain, my little darling," rejoined the old man, and extended her his hand; she, however, stepped back from him, and exclaimed, with intense animation:

"I do not want to be your little darling if you speak so of Paula! One as old as you are ought to be just! You do not know her at all, and as to what you said about her heart—"

"Be quiet, my child," said the widow, interrupting her, and the old man replied to the little girl with peculiar emphasis:

"It would be well and profitable for us all, my little hurricane, to forget this heart, to forget it in good and evil. To-day she was tried by the high court of justice, and this heart has been sentenced to stop beating."

"Sentenced! Merciful Heaven!" cried Pulcheria, and as she arose her mother exclaimed:

"For God's sake! It is a sin to jest about such things.

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it true, is it possible? These miserable, these— I see from your expression it is true, they have sentenced Paula to death."

"You have said it," replied Horus, calmly. "The young Damascus girl will be executed."

"And this—this you wait so long to tell us?" said Pulcheria, weeping, and Maria cried out:

"And besides you were able to laugh and jest; you— Shame upon you! And if you were not such a weak old man—"

At these words Mme. Johanna again reprimanded the child, and inquired, sobbing:

"Execute! Are they going to behead her? Is there then for her, who was as far away from that unfortunate fight as we, for her, the daughter of Thomas, this noble young woman, no mercy?"

Thereupon the old man replied:

"Wait, just wait! It may be that Heaven has designed her for great things. It may be intended that she, by her death, shall save from destruction a whole land and its people. It might be possible—"

"Speak out clearly; these oracles make me shudder," said the widow, interrupting him; but he shrugged his shoulders, and said, composedly:

"That which we conceive is not knowledge. Heaven must here decide. Happy will it be for us all; for me, for you, for her, for Pulcheria, and for the absent Philippus if the Godhead has chosen her for his instrument! But who can see in the dark? If it will do you any good, Johanna, I will tell you that the weak-minded Kahdi, and with him his Arabian associates, out of hatred to Wekil, who is superior to all in mind and will-power, will leave no stone unturned—"

"To save her?" interrupted the widow.

"To-morrow they will hold a council of state to determine whether a messenger shall be sent to Medina with the petition for royal clemency," continued Horus Apollo, with an ugly smile. "Day after to-morrow they will be contending who this messenger shall be, and before the messenger enters Arabia the fate of the condemned woman will have been determined. Wekil Obada rides more rapidly than they, and he has the power and authority as long as Amr remains out of Egypt. They say that the commander dotes on the governor's son, and for his sake—who knows?—the Damascus girl might, as his betrothed—"

"His betrothed?"

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"Thus he himself called her in the presence of the judges, and boasted of his betrothed."

"Paula and Orion?" exclaimed Pulcheria, joyfully clapping her hands in spite of her tears.

"These two," rejoined the old man. "You are right to rejoice, my child! Tender-hearted as you are! Respect the experience of an old man and bless Providence if He shall cause the horse of Kahdi's messenger to grow lame! But you do not wish to hear anything that sounds oracular, and it is perhaps better for us to talk about something else—"

"No, no," said Johanna, in tones of supplication. "About what else can we think than her and her fate! Oh, Horus, I can scarcely believe it is you. What has this poor, unfortunate creature, whom we love so tenderly, and who is so noble, done to you? And do you not reflect that the judges who condemned her will now pursue their investigations further, and inquire how Rufinus, and what we all—"

"What you had to do with that mad plan of the rescue of the nuns?" interrupted the old man. "To prevent that is my business. As long as this old brain can think and this mouth speak, not one hair of your heads shall be touched."

"Our grateful thanks!" rejoined Johanna. "But if you have so much influence use it. You know how dear Paula is to us all, how sincerely Philippus admires her; use it to save her."

"I possess no influence, and do not wish to possess any," replied the old man, harshly.

"But, Horus, Horus! Come, children! You promised that we should find in you a second father. Prove, then, that these were not mere empty words, and swear to us—"

At these words the old man arose as quickly as he could, breathing heavily, two clearly marked red spots colored his pale cheeks, and, in a hoarse voice, he exclaimed:

"Not another word! Make no attempt to move me, no doleful scene! Enough, a thousand times enough of all this. You heard me once, and now hear once more; the Damascus girl or I, she or I. If you can not prevail upon yourselves, whatever the future may bring forth, to keep silence about her in my presence, then—then—I will not swear, but what I declare I always perform—then I shall return to my old den sadder and wiser by one bitter experience. I shall drag on my existence or die, according as my goddess shall decree."

With these words he left the room, and little Maria raised her clinched first, shook it at him as he withdrew, and exclaimed:

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"Oh, if he would only go, this old, hardened, unjust monster! Oh, if I were only a man!" And then she burst out into tears, and without heeding the widow's reproof, continued: "Ah, there is nothing so bad as he, Mother Johanna! He would like to see her die; he wants her to die; I feel it; he is capable of such a wish! Did you hear him say, Pul, he would be glad if the messenger's horse, who is to rescue her, would become lame? And she is now the betrothed of my Orion. I have always determined that they should belong to each other—but they will murder him too, but they shall not, as long as there is a just God in heaven. Oh, if I were—if I were only—" Her voice became choked with sobbing, and when she succeeded in controlling herself somewhat she besought Pulcheria and her mother to take her to Paula, and as they shared her wish they started on their road to the prison before it should grow dark. The nearer they approached the market, which they had to cross, the more crowded the streets became.

Everybody was going in the same direction; the crowd carried them along in its current, but from the market they could hear the shrieking and yelling of thousands of people. Johanna became very uneasy in the great crowd at the noise on the market square, and she would have gladly returned home with her protégées, or else gone around the square by a side street, but everything was moving in that direction, and it would have been easier to swim against a mighty torrent than to have returned home. Thus they soon reached the market, and when there, surrounded on all sides, were soon compelled to stand still. The widow's uneasiness increased every moment.

How disagreeable it was to be thus imprisoned in such a crowd with these two young girls. Pulcheria stuck close to her mother, and when she told Maria to give her her hand, the little girl exclaimed:

"Just look, mother, there stands Hassan. He is the tallest of all!"

"If we only had him with us!" sighed the widow.

Then the child jerked her hand loose, slipped as actively as a squirrel through the mass of human beings, and soon reached the Masdakite. He had not yet left Memphis; for the first caravan, which he and his wife intended to join, would not start for several days.

The brave Persian and Maria were good friends, and as soon as he heard that his benefactress was apprehensive in the crowd, he forced his way to her with the child, and the widow began once more to breathe freely when he offered to stay by her and protect her.

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In the meanwhile the noise and tumult had steadily increased. Every eye was turned toward the senate-chamber, for every one expected that something great and extraordinary would happen there.

"But what is it all about?" inquired Maria, pulling at the Persian's coat. Thereupon the giant, without saying a word, bent down, and a moment later to her great delight she found herself standing erect upon his strong arms, which he had crossed upon his breast. From this position, after having arranged a seat upon his broad shoulder, she surveyed the mass of people and objects below her as from a lofty observatory.

Johanna laid her hand anxiously upon her little foot, but she called down to her:

"Mother, Pul, I am sure I am not mistaken! The white ass of our old man is standing in front of the senate chamber, and they are binding a wreath, an olive-wreath, about its neck."

And now from the direction of the *curia*, across the market-place, came the sound of a trumpet rending the hot and suffocating air, and suddenly it became quieter and quieter on all sides, and whenever any one opened his mouth to yell or to speak he would receive a thrust from his neighbor or a command to keep silence. The widow grasped the ankle of the little girl more firmly and inquired, while she wiped the perspiration from her brow:

"What is the matter?" and the child, without moving her eyes, answered hastily:

"Just look toward the portico of the *curia;* there stands the mayor, Alexander the dyer; he used often to come to see grandpapa, and grandmamma didn't like his wife at all, and near by him, standing next to him—don't you recognize him?—is old Horus Apollo. He has just taken a laurel-wreath off his old wig. Alexander is going to speak."

Another trumpet blast interrupted her, and immediately thereafter a loud masculine voice proceeding from the *curia* was heard, and then it became so quiet that very little of what was spoken escaped even the widow and her daughter. The voice spoke as follows:

"Fellow citizens, people of Memphis, companions in misery!" began the mayor, in clear and measured tones. "Ye know our common sufferings. There are none that have not been sent upon us, and still more terrible ones seem to threaten us."

A terrific howl from the crowd expressed their approval, but

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they were soon brought to silence by a blast from the trumpet, and the mayor continued:

"We, the senate, the councilors of the city, upon whom you have imposed the duty of caring for yourselves and your welfare—"

Here a mighty yell interrupted the speaker, and the following cries could be distinguished:

"Take care; do your duty!"

"Money-bags!"

"Keep your word!"

"Rescue us from destruction!"

But again the trumpets brought the discontented to silence, and the mayor continued, but this time in the greatest agitation, and as if he were almost beside himself:

"Hearken to me! Do not interrupt me! Necessity and woe fall upon our heads as well as upon yours. My wife and my son both died last night of the pestilence!"

This time only a low murmur passed through the crowd, and it died away of its own accord, as the dignified old man with his long gray beard dried his eyes and continued:

"If there is one among you, man, woman or child, who can accuse us of procrastination, let him lay his complaint against us before God, before our new master, the caliph, and before you yourselves, citizens of Memphis; but not now, companions in misfortunes, not now! Cease now your crying and shrieking, now that salvation is beckoning to you, hearken unto me. Make known how you will receive this last extreme measure of relief that I am come to recommend to you!"

"Hear him! Quiet! Down with those that interrupt him!" sounded from all sides, and the speaker continued:

"As Christians, we first appealed for succor to our Father in heaven, to our only divine Saviour, and to His holy Church, and I ask you, has there been any lack of prayers, of divine services, of processions, of offerings of incense? No, no, my beloved fellow citizens, male and female! Each of you will bear me witness, assuredly not! But Heaven has shown itself deaf and dumb and blind to our necessities, ay, as though it were powerless—no, not as if powerless, for it moves its hands promptly and powerfully enough in order to heap up woes upon woes. All that human prudence and wisdom could devise and execute has been done, and nothing left untried.

"The old arts of the sorceress and magicians and of the alchemists, which have often succeeded in breaking the power of the evil spirits, they, too, have proven deceptive and ineffective.

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"Then we bethought us of our great and famous fathers and ancestors, and we remembered that we have in our midst a man who knows much, which the rest of us in the course of time have lost sight of and forgotten. During the laborious days and nights of a long life he has become familiar with the wisdom of our forefathers. He possesses the key to their writings, as to the secrets of the ancients, and he has made known to us what means of rescue our forefathers made use of when afflictions such as we are now suffering fell upon them, and this gray-haired old man at my side, the wise and honest Horus Apollo, will disclose to us the secret. Behold the venerable rolls in his hand! They teach what miracles it has done in former days."

Here one of the citizens interrupted the speaker with the cry: "Hail to Horus Apollo, our savior!" and thousands followed him, and by loud cries expressed their thanks and approval to the old man. He bowed modestly, pointed at his narrow chest and sunken lips, and then directed their attention to the mayor as the one who had undertaken to make known to the people his advice, and Alexander continued:

"Great favor, friends and fellow citizens, can be purchased only by great gifts. Our forefathers knew this fact, and when the stream upon which, as we all well know, the whole weal and woe of this land depends, failed to rise, and its failure brought with it calamities of manifold nature, they made a sacrifice to it, a sacrifice which they considered the noblest the earth could produce: a pure and lovely virgin.

"What we anticipate has come to pass: you are horrified! I hear your mutterings, I behold your terrified faces, and how could the soul of a Christian fail to feel an aversion to such a sacrifice? But is it in reality so strange to us? Have we ever given up such practices altogether? Who of us does not address his prayers to Saint Orion, whether in private at our homes, or in the churches under the direction of the priests, whenever he expects a gift from our noble stream, and during this year we cast, as is always our custom on the night of the dripping, amid prayers to this saint, a box containing a human finger into the waves.* This more insignificant sacrifice was intended as a substitute for the more magnificent one of the ancients; it was made, and its necessity has never once been questioned, and even the most austere and holiest lights of the

* As late as the fourteenth century after Christ, a casket containing a human finger was cast by the Egyptian Christians into the Nile for the purpose of inducing it to rise. This was reported and confirmed in an account by the trustworthy Makrisi.

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Church, such as Antonius and Athanasius, Theophilus and Cyril, had nothing to urge against it; beneath their very eyes it was year after year thrown into the waves.

"A finger in a casket! Miserable substitute for the most beautiful and most glorious thing that God has created among men.

"Ought we to be surprised if the saint at last turns with disgust from this pitiful substitute, repels it, and once more demands for his Nile that which was formerly its right?

"But what mother, what father, you ask, is at this time of universal selfishness so imbued with love for his fatherland, his province, his city, as to be willing to give his virgin daughter a sacrifice to the waves in behalf of the common weal? What daughter of our people would be ready for the sake of others and of her own salvation to give up her life without resistance?

"But calm your fears! Do not be apprehensive for the safety of your younger daughters, the darlings of your hearts! Have no fears for your nieces, your sisters, your companions, your betrothed brides! In the earliest ages a stern law forbade the ancients to offer as a sacrifice persons of Egyptian blood, but they were permitted to sacrifice foreigners or such as worshiped other gods than their own.

"Fellow citizens and companions in the faith, the same thing is lawful for us. And now pay attention, each and all of you: Does it not seem that fate itself desires to aid us at last to offer to our blessed Nile this sacrifice that during so many centuries has been denied him? He calls for it, and it is brought to us, as if by a miracle; for by reason of a crime that in no manner destroys her purity, the judges have to-day sentenced to death a lovely, spotless virgin, a foreigner, and in addition a Greek and an heretical Melchite.

"This appeals to you, it stirs your hearts with gratitude. I see it! Prepare, therefore, for your marriage, noble stream, thou benefactor of this land and this nation! The virgin, the bride for whom thou dost pine, we are adorning for thee, we shall conduct her to thee, and she shall be thine.

"And you, fellow citizens, ye inhabitants of Memphis, fellow sufferers," and at these words the mayor bent forward over the portico toward the people, "if I now ask you for your consent, if I in the name of the whole senate and of this gray-headed old man ask you—"

Here he was interrupted by a mighty yell from the assembled multitude that seemed to pierce the very sky, and a thousand voices cried aloud:

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"Into the Nile with the virgin!"

"The Melchite will be wedded to the stream! Make ready wreaths for the bride of the Nile and flowers for her marriage!"

"Let us reverence the teaching of our fathers!"

"Long life to our counselor! Long live Horus Apollo! Hail to the ruler of our city!"

Such were the enthusiastic and joyous cries that were heard; only from the north side of the market, where the empty tables of the money-changers, who long since had transferred their gold and silver to places of safety, were still standing there proceeded an ominous and threatening sound of muttering.

The bosom of the child upon the arm of the Persian had long since begun to heave heavily and deeply. She wanted to know whom those friends up there had selected for their insane and heathenish sacrifice, and when Maria bent down to Johanna to ascertain whether she shared the horrible suspicion that had forced itself upon her, she saw that the eyes of the widow and of her daughter were swimming in tears, and she knew enough and asked no further questions; for a new occurrence demanded her attention. In the neighborhood of the money-changers' tables a hand holding a crucifix had been raised aloft, and the child observed that it gradually and constantly approached the *curia*. The crowd made way for the man, to whom they were subject, for the holy sign which he bore, and it seemed to Maria as though the multitude fell back before the ever-advancing image of the crucified Saviour like the waves of the Red Sea before the flying people of God.

The murmurs on the north side of the market began to grow more powerful, while the cries of the multitude continually grew weaker and every voice seemed to become smothered, and now arose a small, weak, but proud and erect figure in the attire of a bishop, that ascended the steps of the *curia* and disappeared within the building.

Rebounding, the cries of the people changed into a discontented, inquisitive murmur, and this in turn died away, when the little man, who nevertheless appeared tall by reason of the crucifix which he continued to hold aloft, appeared upon the portico of the *curia*, approached the parapet and stretched out his arm with the image of the crucified Saviour far over the front ranks of the people.

Thereupon old Horus Apollo, with eyes sparkling with rage, advanced toward the mayor and demanded of him that he should forbid the obtruder to speak, but the dyer had felt the force of the little man's powerful eye, and he let him have his

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way. Nor did any of the senators dare to obstruct his path, for they all knew the zealous, determined, and learned presbyter, who had the day before been appointed the successor of the deceased Bishop Plotinus.

And now the new shepherd of their souls cried, as loudly as he could raise his voice, to his rebellious flock:

"Behold the crucified One, and hearken unto His servant! Ye long for the blessing of Christ, and yet ye are about to perpetrate this heathenish abomination. The idolatrous shouts, through which I had to force my way to your ears, will be transformed into a howl of lamentation if you close them and are deaf to the words of salvation. Ay, mutter on! Ye can not, however, compel my tongue to keep silence; for it speaks the truth that can not be made to hold its peace! Be it known to every one who has not yet heard it that the crook of the deceased Plotinus, the symbol of episcopal authority, has been transferred to me. I would fain use it with meekness and kindness, yet if it must be I will wield it like a sword and a scourge until your wounds bleed and your bodies burn!

"Behold here the image of your Redeemer in my right hand. I plant it like a wall between you and your heathenish abomination, which in your blindness ye have hailed with cries of praise. Ye madmen, ye recreant disciples! Lift up your hearts and turn your eyes to Him who suffered death upon the cross to save you. Verily, verily, he that believeth on Him shall not perish, but you, where is your faith? While it was night ye cried out: 'The light has vanished!' When ye were sick, ye declared: 'The doctor can not give help!' What blasphemies have been proclaimed here: 'Powerless,' ye cried, 'is the Lord, and his Church! Enchantments, magic, heathenish misdeeds shall save us!' But just because ye have not placed your hopes in the true Saviour and Redeemer, but in enchantments, magic and heathenish crimes, for this reason punishment after punishment is heaped upon you, and so it will continue—I see it coming—until ye be sunken in the mire, and, groaning, seek after the only hand that is able to raise you up.

"That whereby ye blind children of men think to save yourselves from misfortune, that, that very thing is the chief source of your sorrows, and I stand here now to choke up this poisoned fountain and dig for it a bed.

"Ye want to become servants of Moloch, but I hope to make you Christians again. The virgin whom your mad rage would plunge into the abyss of the stream the mildness of our noble Church takes under her protection; for by her

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corporeal death you will bring about the death of your souls. Saint Orion turns with disgust away from you. Away, away with the unfortunate sacrifice; away, away, I say, with your insane plans and your sacrilegious hands—"

"And lay them in your laps and wring them in prayer until they become disabled, and the pestilence and misery have carried off the last one of you!" said the old man, interrupting the bishop, in a voice that was keen and rasping, but that could be heard a long way off, and from the market thousands expressed their approval by a loud and thundering cry.

The mayor, who up to this time, with troubled mind and bowed head, had listened to the bishop, once more recovered his self-possession and cried out, almost beside himself:

"The people are dying, the city and the whole land are going to destruction, and from the stream arise pestilence and ruin. Disclose to us some other means of rescue, or else let us look to our forefathers and try the last expedient."

But the little man raised himself up still more erect, pointed with his left hand to the crucifix, and cried out in the most unalterable composure:

"Believe, hope, pray!"

"Have we not already done so?" cried the mayor. "No dying wife, no child with the death-rattle in its throat has cried to you—"

At these words new sounds of tumult arose, wilder and more powerful than ever, and each one whose house and whose heart had been visited by death, whose garden and plantation were parched up, whose dates were falling from the trees, raised his voice and cried:

"The sacrifice! the sacrifice!"

"Into the stream with the virgin!"

"All hail to our saviors! all hail to Horus Apollo!"

But others cried out during the intervals:

"Let us remain Christians!"

"All hail to Bishop John!"

"Our souls!"

In the meantime the prelate attempted to get the attention of the people again, and when he failed in this he turned once more toward the mayor, the senators, the trumpeters, and at last he succeeded in inducing the latter to blow their trumpets again and again, louder and louder, but the trumpet-blasts had no effect; for some of the groups had got together upon the market-place, and the scuffling and fighting threatened to end in a bloody street-battle. Protected by the Masdakite, the ladies had succeeded in leaving the market-place before the

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Arabian horsemen galloped up to put an end to the fight; Bishop John, however, declared to the fathers of the city upon the portico of the *curia* that he would make every effort in his power to prevent the inhuman and unchristian sacrifice of a virgin, even though she were a Melchite and had been sentenced to death. He would to-day dispatch a carrier-pigeon to Upper Egypt, and request the decision of the patriarch. When Horus Apollo replied to him that the representative of the caliph had given his consent to the sacrifice, and that even in opposition to the will of the clergy they proposed to put an end to the sufferings of the people, the bishop grew enraged and threatened those who had conceived the abominable idea with the curse of the Church. Then the old man again advanced to meet him with burning eloquence, the senators in despair adhered to him, and the bishop left the *curia* in a state of the deepest irritation.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A VISIT TO THE PRISON.

To the quiet, retiring widow of Rufinus nothing was more insufferable than a mob.

The unrestrained passion, the noise and tumult and all the coarseness with which one comes in contact, offended her tender nature, and during the speech of the old man her only desire had been to escape the noise and tumult of the market-place, but as soon as she became convinced that Paula was the unfortunate creature whom her horrible guest proposed to deliver up to the superstition of the populace, she no longer thought of returning home, but endured the inconvenience of remaining in the crowd, and finally caused Hassan to escort the two young girls and herself to the prison, although the course thither lay through the most frequented streets.

Had the inexpressible and horrible fate that awaited Paula already found its way to her through the walls of the prison, or would it still be vouchsafed to her, Johanna, to prepare her for it and to offer her consolation; for the death that already threatened her must have almost driven her to the brink of despair?

Yesterday the jailer would willingly and without any objection have permitted her to see Paula, for Kahdi had ordered him to show both her and Orion every consideration, but the threats of Wekil caused him to refuse Johanna this privilege to-day; but while she was talking with him his little infant

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boy, with whom Pulcheria had the day before played in her affectionate manner, again stretched out his little arms to her, and she raised him up and kissed him, and thereby made a deep impression upon the hearts of the jailer's family, but the deepest upon the heart of the child's young mother, and she again took the ladies under her protection and won for them her husband's favor.

At the inn of her parents beneath the palm-trees the pretty Eman had been wont to wait upon the joyous Orion far more willingly than upon many other of her guests, and her husband, who in true Egyptian fashion was thoroughly obedient to his spouse, had not been entirely free from jealousy, but now that he had ascertained that the lovely Damascus girl was Orion's betrothed he showed himself far more affable toward the son of his benefactor.

To-day it was unusually noisy and tumultuous in the large halls of the criminals, as was always the case when the judges pronounced sentence of death, and the ladies shuddered when they heard the yells and cries of these unfortunate people. Of many a shrill cry it was impossible to say whether it had its origin in mere wild excess of spirits or in fearful pain, and it would have been scarcely possible to conceive a more suitable accompaniment for these frightful sounds than the rattling of chains.

When the ladies at length reached Paula's cell their hearts beat with increased apprehension, for behind that door which the jailer was now about to open must be found both despair and agonizing fear of death.

The prisoner was standing at the window with her forehead pressed against the iron cross-bars, and listened out into the dark night at her lover's music, which sounded amid the uproar of the criminals like the musical report of bells in the midst of a thunder-storm.

Near her neat little couch the nurse sat dozing with her spindle in her lap, and neither she nor her mistress observed the ladies enter the room. A wretched little lamp cast its gloomy light around the cell.

Maria wanted to rush into the arms of her friend, but Johanna held her back and called Paula gently and tenderly by name. But she was not heard; pain and fear of death had perhaps taken complete possession of her soul. The widow then raised her voice louder, and this time the unfortunate girl turned around and uttered a wild cry of delight, hastened toward her faithful friends, who had known how to find her even in prison, and drew first the widow, then Pulcheria, and then

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the child tenderly to her bosom, and when Johanna took her face tenderly in her hands to kiss her and to see how far sorrow and apprehension had altered her beautiful features, she uttered a little cry of astonishment, for she had by no means looked into a face that was changed by grief and anxiety, but into one full of joy and peace, and eyes that looked at her with an expression full of brightness and gratitude.

Could it be possible that they had concealed from her what was awaiting her?

No; for she at once began with the question whether she had heard of her condemnation. And now she began to narrate her experiences before the judges, and how the friend and adopted father of Philippus, her kind-hearted Philippus, had suddenly and inexplicably evinced toward her the most implacable enmity. At these words her friends could no longer restrain their tears; but Paula tried to console them, and told them that she had found in Kahdi a kind and paternal friend, who had promised to solicit the clemency of the caliph on her behalf.

Johanna was scarcely able to control herself in listening to all this. This girl and her heroism in the presence of so terrible a misfortune seemed to her almost a miracle.

Beautiful confidence! But how easily it might be misplaced, and how insecure was the ground upon which she was casting the anchor of her hopes. Even Maria seemed to feel more anxiety than her friend, and threw herself weeping into her arms.

Paula returned her tender embraces and tried to appease Pulcheria about the shameful treatment the old man, who was now their guest, had inflicted upon her, and she smiled affectionately at the widow when the latter asked her how she could remain so quiet and composed in view of such terrible misfortune, and replied that her example had taught her to bear with humility even the greatest afflictions. She had found even in these dark hours far more ground for joy than for complaint, for out of them had arisen for her glorious good fortune. And now, for the first time Johanna and the young girls remembered that she was engaged, and once more she was embraced by loving arms.

At this moment the jailer knocked, and Paula raised herself thoughtfully up and said, in a subdued tone:

"I have something to send to Orion which I can not intrust to a stranger, and now, now I have you, Maria, and you shall carry it to him."

With these words she drew forth the emerald, gave it to the

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little girl, and instructed her to give it to Orion as soon as she found herself alone with him. In the little note in which the jewel was wrapped she requested her betrothed to consider it as his property, and to satisfy the claim of the Church with it.

The jailer was easily persuaded to conduct the child to her uncle, and with what joy and happiness did the little girl lead the way to her uncle's cell. His joy at seeing the child again was great, and he pressed the emerald thankfully to his lips; but when she exclaimed to her uncle that her prophecy had come true and that Paula was his, he contracted his brow, and full of deep earnestness, he lamented to the child that he had probably won his beloved only to lose her again.

"But Kahdi is your friend, and will procure for you both the caliph's pardon!" exclaimed the little girl.

"But another enemy has suddenly appeared against us—Horus Apollo."

"Oh, our old man!" exclaimed the child, in a tone of harshness. "If you only knew, Orion! And with it all to have to live under the same roof with him!"

"You?" cried the young man.

"Yes I and Pul and mother Johanna!" And now Maria narrated how the old man had come to their house, and from numerous hints Orion guessed that she was concealing something important from him, and so he urged her not to keep anything from him, and at length the child could no longer resist telling him all that she had heard and seen.

He then began to lose his entire peace of mind and composure. Beside himself with grief he called aloud the name of his betrothed, and longed passionately for the return of the Arabian commander Amr, the only man who could give aid at this time of direful necessity. He now centered all his hope in him. He had shown himself almost a second father to him, and had intrusted to him a difficult but beautiful problem for solution.

"Into which you have plunged heels over head!" exclaimed the child.

"During my journey I have thought over everything," rejoined Orion. "Yesterday I also attempted to write down the first part, but I lacked exactly what I most needed, the maps and lists! Nilus had collected them all together, and they were to be carried along with me on my trip with the nuns, and I ordered them to be sent to the house of Rufinus—"

"For me to take care of?" interrupted the child, with beaming eyes. "Oh, they are there! I saw the manuscripts them-

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selves when we were emptying the drawers for the old man, and to-morrow, to-morrow morning early you shall have them all."

Orion then kissed the child upon the forehead hastily but with heart overflowing, and then struck upon the wall of his cell with his fist and exclaimed, after a grating sound had been heard on the other side:

"Good news, Nilus! The plans and lists have been found; I shall have them to-morrow."

"Splendid!" answered the voice of the treasurer from the next room. "We need something to console us! A short while ago I received a companion who laid violent hands upon an Arabian horseman in a tumult in the market-place. He has told me most revolting news."

"Which affects my betrothed?"

"Alas, master, 'tis true!"

"I have already been informed of the news," replied the young man, and after exchanging a few more words concerning the mad proposition of old Horus Apollo, Nilus continued:

"My fellow prisoner tells me further that the Arabians, while he was detained in the guard-house, spoke of a messenger from the commander, who announced the arrival of their master in Medina, and declared further that he intended to make only a short stay in that city. Consequently they would not have to await his return a very long time."

"And so he will have started long before Kahdi's messenger arrives and delivers to the caliph his petition for royal clemency. We can now place our hopes in Amr and Amr alone, and if we could only get word to him on his journey—"

"He would certainly not linger long in Upper Egypt; he would hasten his arrival, or send a representative with full powers in advance," was heard through the wall. "If we only had a trustworthy man to send to meet him. Our people are scattered to the four winds, and to search for them now—"

At these words the clear, childish voice of Maria interrupted:

"I'll provide a messenger."

"You? But reflect, my child!" interrupted Orion.

She, however, paid no heed to his objections, but, certain of her plan, continued, with animation:

"Everything, every single thing shall be reported to him! May I tell him also of the part I have heard you took in the escape of the nuns?"

"No, under no circumstances!" exclaimed Nilus and Orion, simultaneously, and Maria inferred from this exclamation that

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her offer had been accepted, and clapped her hands, exclaiming, with animation and cheeks aglow:

"The messenger shall start to-morrow. Trust all to me. I shall manage it as well as the oldest person could. And now tell me accurately the route he must take. For safety's sake scratch the names of the stations here upon my tablet— But wait a moment, I must first smooth it off!"

"What is that written there in the wax?" asked Orion "A large heart with numerous little squares in it. What does that mean?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the child, somewhat embarrassed. "I was simply showing how I divided my heart among those I love. One whole half belongs to our Paula, this square is yours, but there, there, there," and with these words she thrust the stylus into the wax. "Here I had granted the old man a little place. You dare to come again before my eyes, you just dare!" And so saying, she polished the wax with her nimble little fingers, and Orion traced in the wax in the place where the erased heart had been, "The plaything of a child; matters upon which depended the lives of two individuals." He did it with perfect confidence in fate and in the conscientiousness of his little confederate. On the next day she was to receive early in the morning a letter for the general.

"But a fast rider—and Amr always selects the road by way of the mountains and Berenice—is expensive," observed the treasurer, "and even if we were to devote our last remaining gold pieces to the matter, they would hardly be sufficient."

"You keep your gold, you have need for it here," said the child, interrupting him. "But wait! There are my pearls and my mother's jewels; we might—but—"

"One ought not to part with such things, my precious little golden heart," added Orion.

"Oh, yes, yes. What can I do with them? But mother Johanna has my mother's jewels stored away."

"And you hesitate to ask her for them?" asked the young man.

He then turned to the treasurer, and as he handed the necessary sum over, Orion drew from his finger a costly sapphire, gave it to Maria and instructed her to hand it to her foster-mother. The Jew Gamaliel would for such a pledge give her as much as she might need.

With joy Maria took the gem, but when the jailer appeared a few moments later her joy suddenly changed to sorrow, and she took leave of Orion as though she were parting with him forever.

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As they were going along the passage leading to Paula's cell the jailer suddenly stopped short; for there were some people ascending the steps.

If it should happen to be the negro Wekil, and he were to find visitors in the prison at such an hour! But no!

Two lamps were being carried in front of the guest, and in the reflection her companion recognized John the Presbyter, the new Bishop of Memphis, who had often before visited the prisoners to give them consolation.

To-day the desire of seeing the condemned Melchite lady brought him so late to the prison. Maria's dress and manner caused him at once to see that she was not connected with any officer of the prison, and as soon as he had ascertained who she was he whispered to his attendant, an old deacon whom he always took with him when he was going to visit female prisoners:

"She found here!" After being informed with whom the child had come thither at so late an hour, he again turned to his official attendant, and said, in a subdued tone:

"The wife and daughter of Rufinus. So! I have had these Greeks in my eye for a long time. Once or twice a year at church! Melchites in disguise! Intimate with the Damascus girl! And the granddaughter of the Mukaukas is being brought up with such surroundings! An insane game! Benjamin has again been right in his suspicion, now as ever!" Then he again lowered his voice and inquired: "Whether they shall take her with them at once?" and when the deacon suggested some objections to doing so, he rejoined promptly:

"You are right; it suffices for the present to know where she lives."

In the meanwhile the jailer had opened Paula's cell, and before entering the bishop addressed a few kind words to the child, and asked her whether she did not long to see her mother, and when Maria answered: "Very often!" he continued, passing his bony hand through her locks, and said:

"I thought so. You have a pretty name, my child, and as your mother has done, so will you perhaps some day devote your life to the service of that woman of all women after whom you were baptized, Mary."

Thereupon he entered the cell, leading the little girl by the hand, and while Paula looked with some embarrassment at the priest who came to visit her at so late an hour, both Johanna and Pulcheria recognized in him the noble priest who had so bravely resisted the old man and the misguided people, and made an humble and deep courtesy to him. The

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bishop observed this, and concluded that these Greeks might perhaps after all belong to his Church. At any rate the child could be left with them with perfect security a few days longer. After he had exchanged friendly words with the ladies, the widow prepared to yield the field to him and to take leave. Thereupon the bishop approached her, and announced to her his intention of paying her a visit on the next day or the day thereafter. It pertained, he said, to the happiness of a person who was dear to them both, and Johanna, who believed that he was talking of Paula, whispered to him:

"She has no idea yet of the horrible fate with which the people threaten her. If possible, spare her this frightful intelligence before she seeks her night's rest."

"If possible!" repeated the divine; and when Maria, in taking leave of him kissed his hand, he drew her to him and said: "The Christ-child and every Christian child belongs to its mother. You are blessed above thousands, Maria! Heaven claimed your father as a martyr, your mother has consecrated herself to Heaven. Your way is marked out for you, my child; reflect about this matter! To-morrow—no, day after to-morrow I shall come and start you upon this new road."

Johanna turned pale when she heard these words; for now for the first time she understood what the object of the bishop's visit to her was, and at the foot of the stairway she threw her arms around the child and asked her, softly:

"Do you pine for the cloister; would you like to lead the life of a nun far away from us, like your mother, bent upon the salvation of your own soul alone in that state of undisturbed happiness which Pul has perhaps more than once described to you?"

But the child answered this question with an emphatic denial, and when Johanna let her head sink upon her bosom with an expression of grief and care in her face, Maria's face again brightened up, and she exclaimed:

"Just have no fear, dear mother! By day after to-morrow a great many changes may occur! Let my lord bishop come. I'll know how to manage with him. Oh, you do not know me yet! I have been like a little lamb among you during all these misfortunes and serious events, but there is something entirely different within me; you will be surprised!"

"Rather remain as you are!" said the widow.

"Always and forever full of love for you and Pul; but I have become an important confidential agent; to-morrow morning early I have something very important to do for Orion. Something— Hassan will accompany me. Impor

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tant, very important, my dear mamma! But what it is I dare not tell a soul on earth, not even you!"

At this point she was interrupted, for the massive door of the prison opened before them with a loud noise.

It was closed again for the bishop a few hours later, for his conversation with Paula lasted that length of time.

To the question whether she was an orthodox Greek, or, as the people expressed it, a Melchite, she gave an affirmative answer, and added that if he had come to see her for the purpose of persuading her to abjure the faith of her fathers, his trouble would be in vain; but that she respected in him the Christian, the priest, the scholar, the man whom her deceased uncle had held in the highest esteem among all the divines of his confession, and she would gladly disclose to him, in view of her approaching death, all that was agitating her heart.

He then looked into her quiet, pure eyes, and if he had been willing after her first answer to threaten her with the dreadful fate, which he had striven on the market-place to avert from her, he now remembered the request of the kind Greek lady and imposed silence upon himself.

Until midnight he listened to her story of all the happiness and sorrow she had experienced in her young life; his sharp intellect examined her heart, his own heart received strength and courage from hers, and when he had left her and was wending his way homeward attended by his deacon, the first words with which he broke the silence that had lasted for a long while, was:

"While you were sleeping, God bestowed upon me, through the instrumentality of this heretical child of the world, an edifying hour."

CHAPTER XLV.

MARIA MATURES HER PLAN OF RESCUE.

After the door of the huge prison had closed behind the ladies they returned along the still hot, but quiet streets, Johanna leaning on Pulcheria's arm, and Hassan, with Maria, following behind.

The good heart of the giant was attached to the child, and now and then he would pass his huge hand across his eyes, while she was explaining to him what the scene that he had witnessed in the market-place had signified, and what a fearful end was threatening Paula.

At times he would interrupt her with strange sounds, which gave expression to his grief and anger, for he looked up to his

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beautiful protectress as to some higher being, and Mandana had often remarked that she could never forget what the noble young lady had done for her.

"If I," broke out Hassan, raising his powerful fist, "if I could only do so, they should—" and the little girl at these words glanced up at him with a knowing and beseeching expression, and exclaimed, earnestly:

"You can, Hassan, you can!"

"I?" asked the Persian, in amazement, and shook his head incredulously.

"Yes, you, Hassan; exactly you. In the prison yonder an arrangement was made, and if you were only inclined to help us—"

"Inclined," laughed the brave fellow, striking his breast. He then continued in a broken Greek that was peculiar and entirely his own, but which was quite easy to understand: "I will give hide and hair to help the young lady; only speak out!"

The child then drew her arms around the strong, muscular arm of the giant, and drew him to her, and said:

"We knew very well that you had a grateful heart. But look," here she interrupted herself and asked in a totally different tone of voice: "Do you believe in a God? Or wait, do you know what a sacred oath is? Can you swear by anything? Oh, yes, yes," and now she raised herself to her full height and continued, in a solemn tone: "Swear to me by your betrothed bride Mandana, and as surely as you believe that she loves you—"

"But, my little darling—"

"Swear by her that what I am about to tell you you will never betray to any human being, not even to Mother Johanna or to Pul, and not even to your Mandana, unless it will be impossible to help it, and only then when she has promised you sacredly—"

"What then? I am beginning to grow uneasy; what am I to swear?"

"Not to betray what I am about to tell you in confidence."

"Well, certainly, my little mistress, I can promise that."

Thereupon Maria drew a long breath and after a long drawn-out "Ah!" she disclosed to him that it was necessary to send a trustworthy messenger to meet the commander Amr, in order to be in time to save Paula, and then followed the question, whether he was familiar with the road across the mountains from Babylon to old Berenice, and when he replied that he had just come over that route, and that it was the one nearest the

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sea when one was going to Dschidda and Medina, she repeated her "Ah!" in a tone of deep satisfaction, seized his hand and continued while she played with his large fingers, in a tone of flattery, but at the same time of urgent request:

"And now, my good, noble Hassan, there is only one single trustworthy messenger in Memphis, but he, you see, he has a betrothed bride, and consequently would much rather marry and depart for his home with his wife than help us to save the life of poor, unfortunate Paula."

"The rascal!" growled the Persian.

Then Maria burst out laughing: "Yes, the rascal!" and she continued, in a tone of merriment: "But you are abusing yourself, stupid Hassan, you, you are the messenger whom I mean, the only faithful and trustworthy one far or near. You, you must go to meet the commander—"

"I!" exclaimed the caravan-leader, stopping still to give vent to his surprise, but Maria dragged him forward and said:

"Come on, or else they will observe us; yes, you, you are to—"

"But, my child, my child," interrupted the Persian in a tone of complaint; "I must return to my master, and I, you see, whatever is right—"

"You just don't want to leave your beloved Mandana, even though on that account the kind young lady who watched night and day by your beds meets with her death, the most horrible and cruel death that can be conceived of. That other person, whom nobody had nursed till he was restored to health, you were quick enough to call him 'a rascal.'"

"But be considerate! Listen to me, my little mistress!" interrupted Hassan again, drawing his hand away from her. "'Tis true I intended to wait awhile longer, and Mandana must adapt herself to circumstances, but one person can not be expected to be capable of doing everything. I can ride and escort caravans. I can keep a camel-driver under strict control, and pitch a tent, but to have communications with great men, to go into the presence of such a man as the commander Amr with requests and wishes, let me tell you, my little darling—even if it were for the purpose of saving my own father's life—it would be—"

"But who has asked you to do any such thing?" asked the little girl. "You may remain as dumb as a fish; leave the speaking to your companion to attend to."

"Ah, so another person is to— But, great Masdak— Let him go by himself!"

"Will you insist upon interrrupting me every other word?"

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said the child. "First listen to what I have got to say, and then make objections! The second messenger is not a man at all, but only a lady, and—now open your ears wide—and I am this lady. I, whom you see here, and if you stand still again, then I shall believe that you are going to betray me. In brief, as surely as I desire to rescue Paula, just so surely is it my intention to ride forward to meet the general; and if you refuse to accompany me, then I shall go alone and see if the crippled old Gibbus—"

Hassan, up to this point, had not been able to recover from his boundless surprise; now, however, he exclaimed:

"You—you— And as far as Berenike, or perhaps even across the mountains—"

"Yes, across the mountains," she repeated, "and if it becomes necessary, through the clouds and beyond."

"But such a thing is impossible, such a thing has never been heard of since the world began!" objected the Persian. "A young girl, a little miss, as envoy, all alone with such a rough fellow as I am. No, no, no!"

"Yes, a hundred times, no, and as many times more," continued the child with delight. "The little miss shall remain at home, and a young boy will accompany you, whom you shall call Marius, not Maria."

"A young boy! I thought you said— I believe I am going mad!"

"A young boy that is a girl and boy at the same time," laughed the child. "But you shall understand all about it. I shall accompany you dressed up like a boy, and to-morrow when we start, you watch now, you will take me for my own brother."

"Your own brother! Such a little head as you have! In it even what is impossible becomes possible," said Hassan, smiling as he glanced down upon the little girl in a good-natured manner; but suddenly the stupendous character of her request presented itself to his mind again, and he exclaimed, almost beside himself:

"But, my master, my master! It can not be done; no, it is simply impossible!"

"It is just for his sake that you will do us this service," replied Maria, with confidence. "He is Paula's friend and protector, and when he hears what you have done for her he will commend you; but if you forsake us, then I know of a certainty—"

"What then?"

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"That he will say: 'I always thought that Hassan was a more prudent and kind-hearted fellow.'"

"You think he would say that?"

"As truly as our house is standing yonder! We have not time to contend further, so it is settled; we shall journey together. To-morrow morning early I shall find you in the garden. Tell your Mandana that a matter of grave importance calls you away."

"And Madame Johanna?" inquired the Persian, and his voice had the sound of deep thought and anxiety as he continued: "That you refuse to consult her and take her into your confidence, my child, displeases me more than anything else."

"But she will know all about it, only not just yet," rejoined Maria; "and if she learns day after to-morrow for what purpose I have left her, and that you are with me, she will praise us and bless us; she will do it as certainly as I hope that the all-wise God will be with us on our journey."

These words, which evidently came from the very bottom of her heart, dispelled the last ray of resistance on the part of the Masdakite, and just at the right time, for their walk was at an end, and it seemed to both that they had come the whole distance in only a few steps.

They had passed hard by numerous groups of noisy and contentious citizens, and many a funeral procession of persons who had died of the plague filed by them accompanied by the illumination of torches, and yet it had all been unobserved by them.

It was not until they had reached the garden-gate that they again began to observe what was going on around them. There they found the gardener Gibbus and all the domestics waiting with anxiety for the return of the belated ladies. The Greek governess Eudoxia was also awaiting their appearance with anxious heart. They were received in the house by Horus Apollo, but Johanna and Pulcheria received his salutation only with a cold bow, and Maria persistently kept her back turned upon him. The old man then shrugged his shoulders with an expression of disappointment and impatience, and when he was alone in his chamber he muttered to himself:

"This woman! She will bring to destruction even the happy days upon which I had fixed my hopes for the rest of my life!"

The widow and her daughter talked about Maria a long time after they had retired to their bed-chamber. She had told them good-night with as much tenderness and devotion as if she were about to be separated from them forever. Poor child!

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She perhaps had some idea of what a sad fate she was designed for at the hands of the bishop and perhaps of her own mother! But Maria did not look as if she were about to meet with a great misfortune; Eudoxia, who was her room-mate, rejoiced on the other hand because of her bright spirits; she was only surprised that the little girl, who usually fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow, to-night remained awake so long. Involuntarily the Greek, who by reason of increasing age suffered from various indispositions, and consequently usually retired rather late, followed every movement of the child.

But what did that mean?

Between midnight and morning Maria suddenly sprung up from her bed, threw a wrapper around her and went into an adjoining room with the candle.

Soon the light in the next room became brighter. She must have lighted a lamp, and when a short while afterward Eudoxia heard the door of the sitting-room open, she arose and softly crossed the threshold.

Now Maria returned carrying on her arm the new clothes of a boy, the same clothes that Pulcheria and the governess herself had made as a Sunday outfit for the lame garden-boy. The little girl, with a smile upon her face, began to try on the blue coat, and after throwing the clothes in a drawer, she seated herself at the table and commenced to write. She seemed to have undertaken a very difficult task; for at times she would gaze steadfastly at the parchment and rub her forehead, and then she would cast her eyes upward, buried in thought. She had already completed a few sentences when she suddenly sprung up, called out Eudoxia's name, and started toward the bedroom.

The Greek met her, and Maria threw herself into her arms, and before she could ask her a question, she declared that she had been chosen to execute a matter of great and stupendous importance. She was just on the point of waking her and of confiding the matter to her and asking her advice.

All this sounded so affectionate, so sincere, and in her fiery enthusiasm she looked so charmingly attractive!

The governess's heart opened wide, and her scolding words died away upon her lips, and for the first time in her life she felt as if this orphan child were her own, as if her own weal and woe was identical with hers, and as though she, who during her whole life had only thought of herself and of her own interests, and who had looked upon Maria's education solely as service rendered for salary and support, now felt as if she could sacrifice for the child's sake herself and her last penny. And

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now, when the little girl threw her arms around her neck and besought her not to betray her, but rather to help her in her work of mercy, which had no other object than to save the lives of Paula and Orion, who were exposed to such terrible dangers, her eyes began to fill with tears, and she kissed the glowing cheeks of the child once more, and called her her precious, darling little daughter. This gave the little girl courage, and with pathetic dignity, which evoked a smile from the governess, she took Eudoxia's Bible from her desk, laid it upon the table, and said, while her beseeching eyes were fixed upon those of the governess:

"Swear to me— No, but you must be very serious, for there could not be a matter of graver importance. Swear to me not to betray to a soul, not even to Mother Johanna, what I am about to confide to you."

Eudoxia promised, but was unwilling to take an oath. "Yea, yea, nay, nay," is the best oath of a Christian, said our Saviour; but Maria clung to her, stroked her thin cheeks, and assured her that she could not speak unless she would do what she asked her, and the Greek was unable at this hour to resist this sweet flattery, and suffered Maria to take her hand and lay it upon the Bible, and when this had been done, Eudoxia did what Maria demanded, and with a violent shaking of her head, and as though she were forced against her will, she swore the oath which her little pupil prescribed to her. Thereupon the governess threw herself, as though she were exhausted and terrified at her own weakness, upon the divan, and the little girl utilized her victory, and threw herself at the Greek's feet, and narrated to her all that she knew of Paula, and of the dangers that threatened both her and Orion; and, as she had observed how high the young man stood in the governess's favor, she was cunning enough to represent in the darkest colors the dangers to which he was exposed.

Up to this point Eudoxia had not ceased to stroke the little girl's locks and to agree with all she said; but when she heard that Maria proposed to undertake herself the duties of a courier, she sprung up and declared with the greatest emphasis that she would never consent to such a piece of temerity, to such senseless folly—never, no, never.

Now, however, Maria called into the field all the powers of persuasion and the arts of flattery she could command. There was no other suitable courier to be found, and it was a question of life or death for Paula and Orion.

Was a trip of this sort across the mountains after all so great an undertaking?

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She knew how to ride very well, and did not mind the heat at all! Had she not ridden more than once from Memphis out to the plantations? And the brave Hassan would be with her, and along the road across the mountains, the safest road in the land, there were stations where travelers could find entertainment. And if they found the commander she would be better able to give him information about everything than any other person on earth.

But the Greek would not give way, even though she admitted that the child's plan was not so foolish as she at first thought.

Thereupon the little girl interrupted her, and this time she reminded Eudoxia of her oath, and then confided to her the danger which she, Maria, hoped to escape by means of this mission.

And now she told her governess of her conversation with the bishop, and how anxious Johanna also was about her and her future. Oh, life behind walls, behind bars and keys seemed to her so fearful, and she knew her aversion to such things, her love of freedom and of fresh, vigorous and active life among people and friends, and she hoped that the Arabian commander, after she had put herself under his protection, would protect her from all this; she represented her feelings with such warmth, animation and in such a touching manner that the Greek's opposition melted away, and this elderly woman with her hands before her eyes, that were full of tears, exclaimed:

"It is frightful, it is unheard of, but perhaps it may nevertheless be the best thing to do! Go, ride to meet the general, but ride, ride!"

And when this warm, affectionate, joyous young creature threw her arms around her neck she rejoiced because of her weakness; for this beautiful, fresh, healthful bud of humanity would not have to pine away in confinement and imprisonment, but would continue to be happy and to make happy, and to the joy of herself and all good people would develop and blossom into full and glorious perfection.

And Eudoxia knew the widow, and was confident that she would learn to understand her if she assisted the child to save herself from the greatest danger that can threaten a human soul, the danger of having to become, under circumstances of continual conflict with one's self, something different from that for which one was intended by endowments and inclination.

With a sigh of pain Eudoxia reflected what she herself, beneath the decree of an inexorable fate, in constraint and distaste, had become, though by nature she was a warm-blooded

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and ambitious woman, and she, the narrow-minded governess, assented to the strange and rash request of a child, which women in higher positions would have ridiculed, condemned and rejected.

When day dawned, Eudoxia herself arranged what at other times was intrusted to the maid; she fixed Maria's hair, and in so doing conversed with her as if during the course of one night the little girl had grown into a woman.

She then accompanied her little pupil into the garden, and, where it was practicable, she walked by her side.

Johanna and Pulcheria at breakfast were astonished at her peculiar manner, but it did not displease them, especially as Maria was beaming with joy.

The widow, without any objection, permitted the young girl to go into the city for the purpose of attending to her uncle's secret commission.

Hassan, 'tis true, accompanied her, and anything that made this child so happy could certainly not fail to be right and proper. Orion's maps and plans were promptly dispatched to him in the prison, and before the little girl and her powerful attendant started on their journey, Gibbus returned with the young prisoner's letter to the Arabian general.

It was agreed between them during their walk that Maria should at night-fall join Hassan at Nesptah's inn. At this time of scarcity of fodder and of mortality among beasts of burden, traveling animals of every description, with attendants and guides, could be had in abundance, and the Persian, who was familiar with matters of this kind, considered it best to hire only quick-moving dromedaries, and to carry with them a light tent for his "little mistress."

At the dwelling of the jeweler Gamaliel, Maria ordered him to wait for her, and the jovial goldsmith received her with unfeigned delight.

What had become of the house of the great Mukaukas! Fire had destroyed this seat of justice like the Egyptian cities, for which thousands of years before the prophet had foretold a similar fate. Gamaliel knew in what great danger Orion's life was, and all that threatened the noble young lady, who had once given him one of the most precious jewels and had intrusted to him for investment a portion of her estate. To see at least one member of the family of his deceased benefactor before his eyes, safe and out of danger, relieved his heart. He addressed to Maria one sympathetic question after another, and his wife wanted to bring her one of her apricot-tarts to taste, but Maria requested Gamaliel to grant her without delay a

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private interview; and so the jeweler conducted her into his little working-room, and requested her to speak without restraint, for whatever the niece of the Mukaukas might desire from him was granted in advance. Thereupon, blushing and embarrassed, she drew Orion's ring from its case, handed it to the Jew, and requested him to give her for it whatever he thought right. In the firm belief that the kind-hearted man would without hesitation count out to her gold piece after gold piece, she looked fixedly at him with an inquisitive expression in her bright eyes; he, however, did not even take the ring out of her hand, glanced at it rapidly, and then said, in a serious tone:

"No, my child; we do not transact business with children."

"But I need the money, Gamaliel," she cried, urgently. "I must have it!"

"Must?" inquired the Jew, with a smile. "That is truly a nail that enters wood; but if it meets iron it often bends. Not as though I were hard! But 'money! money! money!' Of what and how much money are you talking, my child? If you need money for bread or for cakes, as is more probably the case, then I'll shut my eyes and willingly thrust my hand in my purse; but if I mistake not, you are living at Rufinus's house, where there is no lack of good things, and I myself have a handsome little sum of money on deposit, which your grandfather gave me some years ago with the remark that it was a legacy which had been left you by your godmother, and the receipt runs in your name; and so your poverty looks very much like what others call wealth."

"Poverty, necessity! I haven't any," interrupted Maria. "But, nevertheless, I need this money, and if I myself possess any, and you have it there in your chest, then give me out of that what I need."

"What you need?" laughed the jeweler. "Ay, but that can not be done so quickly, my child. Before one can do anything like that one needs, in Egypt, a great deal of time and parchment, and ink, a high officer, sixteen witnesses, a *kyrios* (guardian)—"

"Well, then, buy the ring! You are such a kind man, Gamaliel. Do me the favor! You yourself do not believe that I want to buy cakes with it."

"No, but your tender little heart at this time of terrible suffering, when so many people are starving, is probably being driven into some other folly."

"No, indeed! Buy the ring! And do me the great favor—"

"Then Gamaliel would be a rascal and a fool at the same

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time. Do you not remember still the green emerald? That I bought too, and it gave rise to a pretty mess. My child, I can have nothing to do with this ring."

At these words Maria withdrew her hand, and the disappointment and grief that were pictured in her large, moist eyes were so touching that the Jew interrupted himself and continued, in a kind but earnest tone:

"I would rather cut my own old head off than cause you sorrow, my dear child; and, Adonai, I have not said—why should I say?—that you shall leave Gamaliel without money! He has plenty of it, and even if he receives it gladly, he nevertheless gives it willingly when it is proper to give. I can not possibly buy the ring, but— And look me attentively in the face, my little lady. It's a great deal to ask of you, and I have much prettier things in my shop, but if you see anything in it that inspires confidence in you, then speak out and whisper into the ear of the old man in whom your grandfather also used to have some confidence, and tell him: 'I need so much, and—how did you express it just now?—and I must have it!'"

And Maria did find in the jovial, open countenance of the Jew something that inspired confidence in her, and in her childish belief in the inviolability of an oath she caused the third person, and this time a member of a third religious sect, to swear that he would betray nothing she told him, and was surprised that she found in this case also the administering of an oath, a formality in which she had now become quite an adept, so easy a matter. Even grown people purchase with a cheap oath the precious secrets of others. After she had thus assured herself of the fidelity of the Jew she confided to him that she was, at the instance of Orion, going to dispatch a messenger to meet the commander Amr for the purpose of rescuing Paula and himself opportunely from an undeserved death.

The goldsmith listened to her attentively, and before she had completed what she had to say he commenced to manipulate the iron chest that was walled up in the ground, and interrupted her with the question:

"How much?"

Thereupon she mentioned the sum that Nilus had recommended, and scarcely had she completed her reply when the Jew, who had kept secret even from his wife the manner in which the chest could be opened, exclaimed to her:

"Now look out the window, you wonderful little messenger and money-borrower, and if you don't see anything down there in the court then imagine to yourself that a man like Gamaliel was standing there and seized your head and gave you a hearty

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kiss. And then imagine also that in doing so he was quietly thinking to himself: 'Great heavens, if my little daughter Ruth were only like little Maria, the grandchild of the just Mukaukas!'"

Thereupon the fat but active man, who had been down upon his knees, sprung up, left the lid of the chest open, hastened toward the child, impressed a kiss upon her golden locks, and said, laughing:

"That, my little money negotiator, that shall be my interest. But keep on looking out the window until I call you again!"

He then hastened nimbly back with his short legs to the money chest, took from it a little bag full of gold, the contents of which exceeded by a small amount the required sum, shut the safe again, cast a glance, in which was a mixture of mistrust and hearty pleasure, at Maria, and at length called her to him.

Thereupon he emptied the bag out before her, counted out the sum she had demanded, stuck the remaining pieces away, handed the child the bag, and requested her, while he withdrew from the room with a cunning smile, to count over the money and put it back in the bag, and to await his return.

When he appeared again, she had completed her task, and remarked with embarrassment:

"I think one gold piece is missing."

At these words the Jew clasped his hands upon his breast, and turning his eyes toward Heaven, exclaimed:

"Heavens, what a girl! There is the coin, my child. Let a man of experience say it: Whatever you undertake will succeed. You know what you are about, and when you are grown and a wooer comes in quest of your hand he will repair to a good market. But now your signature here, please. 'Tis true you are not of age, and the receipt—may God avert the evil!—will not perhaps be worth anything more than the parchment and ink upon it, yet we will do it for the sake of regularity."

Maria seized the pen, and while she was hastily reading over what the Jew had written, the latter exclaimed, in a fresh outbreak of enthusiasm:

"A young girl, a child! And she reads, examines, convinces herself before she affixes her signature! God bless you, my child! And now here come the tarts, and you will taste them before you— Gracious God! A child, and matters of such grave importance!"

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CHAPTER XLVI.

ORION AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE.

WHILE Hassan, to whose care Maria had intrusted the jeweler's money, was making preparations for the journey with all the foresight and prudence of an experienced caravan-leader, and Maria and her governess were consoling the Persian girl, Mandana, and representing to her that her lover's journey had for its object the rescue of Paula from a terrible death, another session of the high court of justice was taking place in the hall of justice.

This time Orion was the accused. Scarcely had he begun to become engrossed with the plans and lists, which he needed for the purposes of his work, when he was summoned to the bar of justice. The composition of the court was the same as that of the preceding day.

Besides Paula, the new bishop John, as well as the jeweler Gamaliel, who shortly after Maria had left him received a summons, appeared as witnesses.

The prosecutor accused the son of the Mukaukas of having appropriated, in spite of the warning of the patriarch, a costly emerald, which had been left by his father to the Church.

Orion undertook his own defense, repeated all that he had said to the ecclesiastical prince in his father's office in justification of his procedure, and thereupon declared that he desired to put a speedy end to this very disagreeable affair of surrendering the stone and placing it at the disposal of the court.

With these words he handed Paula's emerald to Kahdi and he passed it to the bishop. But John showed that he was not yet satisfied, but read the written deposition of the widow Susannah, who was present when the deceased Mukaukas George, in the presence of his son, had designated as a present to the Church each and every jewel that was contained in the Persian rug. Orion, he declared, became thus subject to the suspicion of an evasion, and it would be difficult to show whether that beautiful stone there upon the table was the one to which the Church was laying claim.

All this was brought forward with the greatest vehemence, and bore the stamp of evident hostility.

Subordination and personal conviction led the zealous prelate to adopt this manner of procedure, for the same carrier-pigeon that conveyed to him the information of his elevation to the office of bishop commanded him to urge on the punish-

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ment of Orion, who was a thorn in the side of the Jacobite Church, a diseased sheep that threatened to infect the rest of the flock. If the youth should offer to produce an emerald it must be examined with great care to determine whether it was the right stone or one that was introduced for the occasion.

For this reason the bishop had expressed his distrust, and although this called forth from the Arabian judges a murmur of displeasure, Kahdi heeded the bishop's suspicion so far as to declare that he had received yesterday from his uncle, the merchant Haschim, a letter written from Dschidda, in which mention was also made of the emerald. His son, without his knowledge and before his journey to Egypt, had weighed the stone, and that the following was an exact statement of its weight. The jeweler Gamaliel had been summoned with his scales and would be requested, for the satisfaction of the bishop, to weigh the jewel.

The Jew forthwith set to work, and old Horus Apollo, who understood perfectly all matters of this description, moved close up to him for the purpose of watching with a suspicious eye his slightest motion.

Paula and Orion watched with feverish pulses the hands and lips of the Jew, while every one present observed the proceedings with breathless suspense. He weighed the jewel twice, and he began the third time with the sharpest attention, but with fingers slightly trembling. All three experiments gave the same result; this stone was heavier by a few grains than the one which the merchant's son had weighed, but the jeweler declared that there could not be among all the emeralds in the world a purer, a more perfect, or a more magnificent one.

Orion began to breathe more freely, and the judges began to ask themselves whether the young Arabian had been guilty of a slight inaccuracy or whether there had been actually an exchange. But it was hard to entertain such an idea, because it would have been to the advantage of the Church and not to that of the accused.

The kind-hearted bishop thought to himself that the patriarch's distrust was now being carried too far, and so he did not open his lips again about the matter.

During the whole proceedings Wekil Obada had kept profound silence, but the challenging, victorious glance with which he first measured Paula and then Orion caused them to apprehend the worst thing that was possible.

After the prosecutor had accused the young man of participation in the much-discussed and bloody fight of the sisters, the latter solemnly affirmed his innocence, and adduced in

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proof of his statement that he had been in attendance upon the general Amr, during the fatal fight between the Arabians and the defenders of the nuns, a fact which the general would corroborate. That by an unheard-of act of despotism he had been robbed of his freedom and property solely upon the ground of a false and unfounded suspicion, and that he hoped in the first place for a just and impartial decision of the court, but then also for protection and compensation upon the part of his master, the caliph. At these words he glanced with flaming eyes at Wekil, but the negro now succeeded in preserving his composure, and this increased the apprehension of those who sympathized with Orion.

Obada, as it seemed apparent from all the circumstances of the case, must feel confident that he had already cast the noose around his victim's neck, and soon it became clear why he assumed this rôle; for scarcely had Orion closed his defense when he arose and handed to Kahdi, with a contemptuous smile, the tablet which the old man had placed in his hands yesterday, described it as a writing addressed to the young lady from Damascus, and requested Kahdi to admit the same in evidence. The heat, he said, had in fact rendered a portion of the writing illegible, but most of the letters could still be recognized. The venerable Horus Apollo had already deciphered the writing, and declared himself ready to read to the judges what the accused, whom his own declarations represented as spotless as a white dove, had in his innocence and truthfulness written down in black and white for his beautiful *fiancée*.

He then gave the old man a sign, and assisted him to rise with some difficulty; but Kahdi requested him to wait, and caused the interpreter to make known to him the contents of the tablet, and then he turned, after the interpreter had with much difficulty read the letter, not to the old man, but to Obada, and asked him whence this writing came.

"Out of the desk of the Damascus lady," rejoined the negro. "My old friend there discovered it."

He pointed as he uttered these words to Horus Apollo, who confirmed the truth of them by a nod of assent.

Thereupon Kahdi arose and advanced toward the young woman, from whose cheeks every trace of color had disappeared on account of her indignation, showed her the tablet, and asked her if she recognized it as her own, and Paula, after she had carefully examined it, replied, casting a glance at the old man, from which both contempt and disgust shone forth:

"Yes, your honor, it is mine. This ignoble old man, with knavish deceit, took it from among my papers."

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For a moment she lost control of her voice; then, nowever turning toward the judges, she cried:

"If there is one among you in whom helplessness and innocence arouses pity, and in whom deception and knavery inspires hatred, then let him go to the wife of Rufinus, into whose house this man has crept, like a hawk into a dove-cote, for no other purpose than to tread beneath his feet unselfish hospitality, to search through her house and to carry off anything and everything that could be of service to him in carrying out his knavish tricks, and let him warn the forsaken woman against this treacherous informer and thief!"

At these words the old man, with a snarl and unable to utter a word, raised his emaciated arm aloft, and the Christian judges exchanged in whispers the most diverse opinions, but the Jew Gamaliel moved his round body hither and thither upon the witness-bench, pounded incessantly and vehemently upon his breast with his finger-tips and attempted to attract first Paula's and then Orion's attention, in order to signify that he was the man to convey the warning to Rufinus's wife. But a blow from Wekil's fist upon his shoulder brought him to himself, and while he began to whimper and rub the smarting place, not daring to cause the powerful man to be reproved by the court for his act of violence, Kahdi handed the tablet to Horus Apollo and ordered him to read it aloud.

But the frightful accusation which the hated patrician's daughter had hurled into his face, and which attributed to his change of domicile motives which in fact were far from the truth, had so deeply aroused and excited him that his old and feeble lungs refused to perform their functions.

Another injustice had been inflicted upon him by this woman, for the kindest impulses had led him to Rufinus's house, and only a play of chance had put the little tablet into his hands. But, nevertheless, Rufinus's widow would be bound to hear of the accusation that he had forced his way into her house as a spy, and then it would be all up with those last happy days of which he had dreamed, and even Philippus might be influenced to repudiate his friendship.

All, all on account of this woman!

He could not find words to express himself, but as he sunk back upon the witness-bench he cast a glance so full of hatred, so fraught with poison and malevolence, that she gently shuddered and thought to herself, this man is ready to destroy himself if by so doing he can effect my destruction.

But the interpreter had already begun to read Orion's letter and to translate it to the Arabian judges, and while he, in

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fulfillment of his duty stammered along, explaining that scarcely one of the characters was easy to recognize, she regained her composure completely, and shortly before the interpreter had finished his task an expression full of joy came over her face. A noble, grand and joyful idea must have flashed across her mind, and it was easy to see that she had succeeded in grasping it and of appropriating it to her purposes.

Orion, who was seated opposite to her, had doubtless observed this, but he did not yet comprehend what the beseeching look she gave him meant, what she demanded of him when she pressed her hand upon her bosom and cast such an imploring glance at him that he felt that his heart must break.

And now the interpreter's task was finished, and what he had read made a deep impression upon the judges. The benevolent countenance of Kahdi assumed an expression of anxiety, and the contents of the letter seemed well calculated to awaken such feelings. The contents of the tablet were as follows:

"After having long waited for you in vain, I am forced to leave. How much I had to tell you! A written farewell—"

Here the lines became too indistinct to read; then, however, followed the fatal and legible conclusion:

"How differently I had expected to close this day, which for the most part has been devoted to preparations for the flight of the nuns, and it gave me great pleasure to do what I could for the innocent and persecuted sisters! We will hope for the best for them, but for ourselves that we may enjoy to-morrow an undisturbed meeting and a farewell that will leave behind recollections upon which we can feast a long time. As was that man among the Egyptians, whom we both lament, so is the commanding general Amr among the Arabians—"

Here the letter ended, and about three lines before the conclusion were illegible.

After Kahdi had held the tablet in his hand a short time he raised his downcast eyes once more toward the judges and auditors, who were waiting in great suspense, and began:

"Even though the accused was not one of those who treasonably raised their hands against our forces, yet it appears incontestably from this document that he had not only knowledge of the proposed flight of the nuns, but zealously aided and abetted them. When did you receive this letter, noble lady?"

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At these words Paula pressed her hands firmly together, and with her head slightly inclined forward and her eyes directed toward the floor, replied:

"When did I receive it? Never; for I wrote the letter myself. I never received it at all."

"You?" inquired Kahdi, astonished.

"It was addressed by me to Orion," replied Paula.

"By you to him? But how did it happen to be in your desk?"

"In a very simple manner," she explained, with her eyes still cast down. "After I had addressed it to my betrothed, I put it with my other papers as soon as it became useless, for he himself appeared, and I did not find it necessary to read what I could explain better by word of mouth." As she spoke these words a strange smile played around her lips, and a loud murmur was heard all through the court-room. Orion glanced in the utmost amazement first at Paula and then at Kahdi; but the negro arose hastily, struck a blow upon the table that thundered through the hall, and cried:

"Ignoble intrigues! Which one of you will allow himself to be deceived by a woman's cunning?"

Horus Apollo, who had once more regained his composure, tittered with an expression of malevolence; but as the negro was about to continue his mad storming, Kahdi interrupted him and gave Orion the floor, who, with cheeks all aglow, had already for the second time addressed him, and now, scarcely able to speak, stammered out:

"No, no, Othman; no, no, your honors, do not believe her. Not she— I, I— That letter—"

But Paula interrupted him:

"He? Can not you all feel and see! He only desires to rescue me and is trying to take my guilt upon his own shoulders! Out of magnanimity, out of love he does it! Do not, do not believe him! Do not let yourselves be deceived by him!"

"I? No; she—that is exactly what she—" said Orion again, but before he could say more Paula cried out to him that that love is false, wrong, that tries out of mistaken magnanimity to sacrifice itself. And when with these words she again pressed her hand upon her bosom with an imploring look he kept silent, and, casting his eyes with a look of tenderest devotion toward heaven, he fell back upon the witness-bench.

And now Paula joyfully exclaimed: "He has thought better of it now and has given up the mad attempt to take upon him-

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self my guilt. You see, Othman, you all see, noble judges. Let me suffer for what I did in behalf of the poor sisters!"

"Thy will be done," snarled the old man, and the negro exclaimed:

"A hellish web of lies, a deception without parallel! But in spite of the shield that a woman has interposed in your defense, I shall nevertheless have my revenge upon you, treasonable rascal! Is it credible, your honors, that a letter should be found weeks after it had been completed among the papers of the writer rather than in the possession of the person to whom it was addressed?"

Kahdi shrugged his shoulders and replied, with calm dignity:

"Reflect, Obada, that we condemned this young lady upon the grounds of a letter, which we found, not in the possession of the recipient, but in the possession of its writer. You raised no objection to the evidence in that case, and it is becoming for judges to use a uniform measure."

These words were spoken in a tone of authority, and their applicability to the case in question aroused the applause of the Arabian justices, and the jeweler could not resist exclaiming, in a loud voice: "Splendid!" But no sooner had he uttered the exclamation than he moved with the speed of lightning out of range of the negro's fist, who could scarcely have heard him, for in angry words and without allowing himself to be interrupted by Kahdi, he set forth how disgraceful it was for men and judges to allow themselves to be duped by a woman, to be influenced by a comedy of fools that are in love, how necessary it should seem to every Mussulman to render life secure and to make an example with due severity of the instigator of a bloody rebellion against the majesty of their authority. And his fluent, vigorous language did not fail to have effect; but the Christians, who wished all possible evil to the Melchite girl, would be satisfied with her ruin, and they would have willingly forgiven the son of the all-honored Mukaukas the commission of this offense, even if he had actually committed it; and after it was shown that it was impossible to determine in whose handwriting the writing upon the tablet was, and a great many arguments had been made on both sides, the consultation proper began.

It was a long time before the judges could agree upon a decision, and during this time Orion sat there upon the prisoner's bench, at times as if he had already been condemned to a cruel death, and again he would look into the eyes of his beloved and press his hand upon his heart, as though he was trying to keep it from bursting asunder. He understood her completely, and

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her nobility exalted him. He had persuaded himself to accept her gift, and still he had fully determined if she had to die that he would follow her in death. The cry, "Non dotel,"* with which Arria saluted her beloved Pactus, as she plunged the dagger into her heart in order to die before him, resounded continuously in his ears; but he thought also to himself that Paula might perhaps find pardon and that he would then have his whole life before him in which he could show her his gratitude.

At length Kahdi announced the decision of the judges; it was impossible to find Orion guilty of death, but at the same time it was just as impossible to reject all belief in his guilt. Accordingly the court declared itself unable to pronounce judgment in the case, and had decided to refer the same to the caliph or to his representative in Egypt, the commanding general Amr. The court, however, decreed that the prisoner should be kept in close confinement in order that he might be ready to satisfy justice in case a final sentence of "guilty" be pronounced against him.

When Kahdi declared what was to be referred to the caliph or to his representative, Wekil exclaimed:

"I—I am the representative of the caliph!"

But a unanimous murmur of denial on the part of the judges repelled his claims, and upon motion of Kahdi it was agreed among them to protect the young man against all forcible attempts on the part of Wekil by doubling the strength of the prison-guard, in view of the fact that grave charges against Wekil were already on their way to Medina.

The negro left the court-room almost beside himself with rage, and Horus Apollo withdrew, busily planning new attempts against the life of the Damascus girl.

When Paula returned to her cell, old Betta thought that she had received her pardon, so joyful, so proud, so sublime did she appear! The gravest danger had been averted from her lover, and it was she and her love that had rescued him.

She had sacrificed her own life, but whatever fate had in store for her, life was now open to him; it would be vouchsafed to him to utilize his splendid endowments, and that he would do it, do it as she longed to see him do it, she had no longer a doubt.

She had not quite completed her account of the trial when the jailer announced to her the name of Kahdi. Immediately thereafter he entered her cell, and after she had expressed to

* It does not hurt.

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him her gratitude, and he had kindly assured her that he was not ashamed to bear the disgrace of being perhaps a duped judge, as a special boon of fate, he brought the conversation to the proper subject of his visit.

"In the letter which I received yesterday from my uncle," thus he began, "much has been said about you. You have won the heart of the old merchant, and the inquiries which he has instituted in regard to your father—"

The young girl interrupted him: "Oh, sir, sir, is the wish, the prayer of my life at last about to be fulfilled?"

"Your father, the noble Thomas, before whom even a Mussulman bows," replied Othman, "he has been—" And now he reported that the hero of Damascus had in fact retired to Mount Sinai, and was living there as a hermit. But that she must not give way to any premature joy, for sick, consumed by a disease that proceeded from his wounded lung, almost dying, he had been found by the messengers. His days were numbered.

"And I—I in prison!" groaned the girl. "Held fast, powerless, robbed of the possibility of rushing into his arms!"

Thereupon he again urged her to compose herself, and, continuing in his mild, quiet manner, he said that day before yesterday a Nabbathæan had come to him and inquired of him as the minister of justice in Egypt whether an old enemy of the Mussulmen, a field marshal, who, in the service of the emperor and of the cross, had fought against the caliph and the crescent, who was sick, wounded and broken, might tread Egyptian soil without exposing himself to the risk of being arrested by the Arabian authorities, and when he, Othman, had found out that this man was Thomas, the hero of Damascus, he joyfully and, as he knew, in accordance with the wishes of his master, the caliph, granted him his freedom and life.

And early this morning her father had arrived in Fostat, and he had received him as a guest in his own house. Yes, Thomas was standing upon the brink of the grave, but was sustained and inspired by the longing to see once more his beloved daughter, who, he had been falsely informed, had lost her life in the massacre of Abyla, and for whom he had long lamented and mourned as for one that was lost. It was his duty to fulfill the last wish of a dying man, and consequently he had commanded the jailer to fix the room that was adjacent to her cell with the furniture that was already on its way from his house. The door between this room and her cell should be opened.

"I shall, then, see him again, shall have him once more,

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live with him, close his eyes, perhaps die with him!" cried Paula, and grasping the kind man's hand she kissed it gratefully.

The Mussulman's eyes filled with tears, and he urged her not to thank him, but the only and all-merciful God above, and before the sun went down the head of the condemned girl rested upon the bosom of the wounded and dying hero, whose still powerful mind and warm heart felt to the fullest extent the ecstasy of seeing his child again.

Thus a new and indescribable joy had visited Paula within the dismal walls of the prison, and on the same day the jailer carried to Orion a letter containing the greetings of the father of his betrothed bride, and as he read the loving congratulations it contained he felt as if an invisible hand had removed from him forever the curse which his own father had pronounced upon him. A strange, joyful peacefulness, a zeal for work and brightness of spirits took possession of him, and he did not permit either mind or pen to rest until the morning began to dawn.

CHAPTER XLVII.

EVENTS AT THE HOUSE OF RUFINUS AFFECTING THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN HORUS APOLLO AND JOHANNA.

Old Horus Apollo returned from the court-house to his new home with his brow ominously contracted.

Before the house of the widow Susannah he saw a group of people gazing into the garden and at the beautiful mansion.

As hundreds of groups had already done before, they, too, met him with exclamations of praise and thanks and words of encouragement, and as he acknowledged them with a slight bow, and in doing so followed the direction of their anxious glances he shuddered, for above the large garden gate was hanging like a brand-mark as a sign of warning a black tablet which notified passers-by:

"Keep far away from this threshold! Behind it is raging the death-bringing pestilence!"

The old man loathed everything that reminded him of death, and a cold chill crept over him. It was dangerous, and caused him apprehension to live so near to a house infected with the plague!

How did it happen that it had reached this healthiest portion of the city, a portion which even the last terrible pestilence had spared?

A city officer whom the old man summoned to his side told

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him that the two slaves, father and son, who were charged with the care of Susannah's bath-house had first been seized, but that they had during the night been secretly conveyed to the new hospital-tents, but that later the widow herself had also fallen a victim to it. In order to secure this quarter of the town against infection, the premises were being guarded on all sides.

"Keep a strict, very strict watch; do not let even a rat escape from the house!" cried the old man, and rode on.

It had grown later than it was yesterday when he got home. It must be time for supper, and as he prepared, after a short rest, with the help of his servant to wash and make ready for the meal, a lame house-maid entered his room and placed a waiter full of hot dishes upon the little table near the divan.

What could this mean?

And before he could ask the question he was told that for the future the ladies desired to eat alone; he would be served in his room.

At these words once more the red spot became visible upon his cheeks, and after a few moments' reflection he called to his servant: "My ass!" and to the maid: "Where is thy mistress?"

"With the jeweler Gamaliel, in the *viridarium;* but they are about to sit down to table."

"Without their guest? I understand what they mean!" muttered the old man, and seizing his hat walked past the maid out of the room.

He met Gamaliel in the vestibule just as a slave-girl was handing him his staff. The old man suspected that the jeweler had come with no other intention than that of warning the ladies against him, so, without honoring him with a glance, he betook himself to the dining-room.

There he found Pulcheria and Maria kneeling before Johanna, and all three weeping bitterly. He had a suspicion for whom their tears were flowing, and inspired with a desire to prove unjust the accusation that he had entered their house as a spy, he addressed the widow.

The latter had shuddered when she saw him enter the room, but now she pointed with outstretched finger to the door, and when he remained standing in order to commence his defense, she interrupted him in a loud and urgent tone:

"No, no, sir! This house shall from now on remain closed to you! You yourself have broken asunder the bonds that united us! Do not disturb our peace! Return thither whence you came!"

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The old man once more tried to speak, but the widow arose and cried to the young girls:

"Follow me, my children!" With these words they hastened into the adjoining room and closed the door behind them.

Horus Apollo remained standing upon the threshold. As old as he was, he had never received before such an insult, but he did not lay it to the charge of those who had shut the door in his face, but to that of the already overcharged account of the Damascus girl, and as he rode home upon his white ass he made frequent halts in order to speak to the passers-by.

During the days that followed he paid no attention to the heat of the day nor to the necessity of giving his body rest, and of exercising his mind with quiet work, but rode morning, noon, and night up and down the streets, and aroused the people by incendiary speeches, declaring everything would go to hopeless destruction if they did not hasten to make use of the only means of rescue, the one he had proposed to them.

He was present at every meeting of the senate, and, with fiery eloquence, he held the senators favorable to his side, opposed with energy the efforts of the bishop, and urgently pressed the fixing of the day when the Nile should celebrate his nuptials with his bride.

He was well acquainted with his Egyptian brethren, and knew their passion for the excitement of a magnificent festival. The marriage of the bride of the Nile to her powerful, restless lord, upon whom the weal and woe of the whole land depended, should be a blooming oasis in the desert of want and despair, and the recollections of his childhood, of the grand processions in honor of Isis, and of the festivals in glorification of Trias and herself, such as he himself had seen and heard his father describe, all that he had read in books concerning the great parades and scenic representations in heathen Egypt he collected together and reproduced to the senate and people in flaming colors, and advised the senators upon the occasion of this marriage to attempt a repetition of this magnificence.

And every one in whose veins Egyptian blood flowed listened attentively to his words, felt pleasure at his propositions and a readiness to make every effort to increase the magnificence of the festival, in which every one could take part either as a participant or as a spectator. Thousands were starving, but for this unheard-of festival there were ample means, and the senate felt no compunction in making new loans to cover the expense.

"Ruin or rescue" was the solution which Horus Apollo had submitted to the people of Memphis. If everything should go to ruin the talents that had been laid up would be destroyed

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with everything else; on the other hand, should their sacrifice avail, should the Nile bless his children by the bestowal of renewed prosperity, of what use was it for the city and country to hold back on account of a few drachmas. And so the day for the nuptials was fixed.

Not full two weeks after sentence of death had been pronounced upon Paula, upon the feast of Saint Serapis, they proposed to celebrate the wonderful, saving festival that would restore to them their joy.

Neither the old man, nor the judges, nor the senators who had seen her could describe the beauty of the bride! The eyes of old Horus sparkled with a fiery hatred as he attempted to describe her! The glances of a lover could not have beamed more brilliantly!

The patrician maid should atone for all the injuries she had done him; and his victory promised to inflict pain, not only upon this one woman, but upon the whole Christian faith, which he cordially hated!

But Bishop John had not remained idle. Immediately after his speech against the decree of the people, he had dispatched a carrier-pigeon to Upper Egypt with news for the patriarch, and he expected Benjamin's answer to afford him means for still more powerful opposition.

In the Church, before the senate, and even upon the street, the bishop and all the clergy made every effort to resist the fiendish design of the senators and people; but the passion which the old man had kindled soon broke forth into brilliant flames, as if it were fidelity to the faith, temperance and prudence, which it was the duty of himself and his followers to respect.

At times the wind blew upon both sides, but upon that of the bishop it came in contact only with dim-glowing coals, while upon the other side it met burning tongues of flames. Want and despair had shaken their faith, had relaxed discipline, and even the most mighty weapons of the Church. "The curse" and "the blessing" had proven themselves powerless. A floating beam had been pointed out to the drowning people, and they refused to wait longer for the life-saving boat which, with strong men at the oars and an experienced pilot at the rudder, was approaching in the distance, and whose duty it was to rescue them.

Horus did not return to Rufinus's house. A few hours after the widow had shown him the door his slaves came to fetch whatever he had left in the house. His body-servant at the

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same time brought a large closed vase to Mme. Johanna, and a letter with the following contents·

"One ought not to condemn without hearing. But you have done so. However, I shall not upbraid you. Upon his return home Philippus will perhaps be able to take up the ends of our bond of union and knit them together again. I send you a portion of the medicine which he gave me when he went away, in order that you might use it in case of necessity. His assistant declares that it is an excellent remedy. May the disease which has seized upon your neighbor's house spare your own!"

This letter caused the widow joy, but when she read it aloud little Maria cried:

"And if we get sick we must not dare to take a drop of this mixture! I tell you he wants to poison us."

However, Johanna insisted that the old man, in spite of his hatred of Paula, was at heart not bad, and Pulcheria declared that it must be so for the simple reason that Philippus loved him so dearly. If he had only been here everything would have been different and would have turned out for the best.

Maria remained with Johanna and Pul until it grew dark. Their conversation turned constantly upon Paula, and when in the afternoon the Nabbathæan messenger announced himself, and in the name of their imprisoned friend reported that he had restored to her her father, the ladies again began to entertain hopes for her, and Maria was enabled, without exciting suspicion, to indulge her ardent desire to show them how deeply and sincerely she loved them.

At length she said she had to go to say her lessons to Eudoxia; she had, she declared, for to-day something that was unusually difficult, and begged them to think of her and to wish her success. She then threw her arms first around the widow's neck and then around Pulcheria's, and as the tears began to well up in her eyes she asked whether she was not a stupid, foolish little creature, but still they must think of her and not forget her.

She shut herself up in her room with the Greek, and Eudoxia cut off her beautiful soft hair, and for the first time shed tears as she did so, and her tears flowed more copiously as she bound around Maria's neck a little amulet containing a lock of hair from the goat's skin of John the Baptist, a legacy she had received from her mother. It was dear and sacred to her, and she had never been separated from it before; but now it was to

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bring good luck in abundance to the child and protect her from all harm.

But had it brought her good fortune?

Not very much, but she still had faith in the healing and protecting power of the relic.

At length Maria stood before her with short hair and dressed like a boy, and the little girl made a wonderfully sweet and handsome boy! Eudoxia could not look often enough at the beautiful child. But Maria was too pretty, too delicate for a boy, so she advised her urgently whenever she met people along the road to pull her broad-brimmed traveling hat far down over her eyes or to blacken her face.

Johanna had learned through Gamaliel, who had in fact called upon her this morning to warn her against the old man, the result of the session of the court, and Paula's magnanimous act had only intensified her admiration for her.

If she could meet the Arabian general she could answer all his questions, and so she felt as she passed through the garden to the street with Eudoxia that she was in every respect well armed for the ordeal.

When she reached the street she kissed her hand toward the house and its beloved occupants, and then with a sigh she pointed to their neighbor's house and said:

"Poor Catharine; she is imprisoned now! I love her in spite of it all, Eudoxia, and when I reflect that she may catch the plague and die— But no! Tell mother and Pulcheria that they must be kind to her. To-morrow after breakfast give them my letter, and if they become anxious about me to-night, quiet them and tell them you know all about it, and that it is useless to be uneasy about me. Make it all right with them, and don't let them worry themselves."

When she reached one of the Jacobite chapels she requested Eudoxia to wait for her, and went in and threw herself before a crucifix.

Soon she reappeared, bright and happy, and as she reached the last houses of the city, she cried:

"Isn't it sinful, Eudoxia? I am leaving behind me precious souls, and yet I feel like an imprisoned bird that has escaped from its cage! Heavens, such a ride by night and through the mountains and desert! A fleet-footed animal beneath me, and above me no roof but the blue vault of heaven with its countless stars! Forward, forward, with a noble end in view! Dependent upon myself alone, intrusted with a matter of grave moment like a grown person! Is it not inspiring? And if God is with me, and I find the commander and succeed in

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touching his heart— Tell me, Eudoxia, will there be a happier girl in the whole world?"

In the inn of Nesptah they found the Masdakite provided with excellent dromedaries and the necessary drivers and guides.

The Greek gave her little darling much additional advice, and added from the depths of her heart her maternal blessing. Hassan lifted the little girl upon her dromedary, arranged her with the greatest care in the saddle, and the little caravan began to move forward. Maria waved many farewells with her handkerchief to her old teacher and newly made friend, and Eudoxia continued to stare after her long after she had disappeared in the darkness.

Then she started home, at first weeping and with head downcast, but afterward erect, with tearless eyes and firm step. She had peculiar sensations, her heart beat more violently than it had done for years, and she felt exalted by the consciousness that she was in the future to act, not according to the hard commands of an onerous duty, but like a free person according to the dictates of her own conscience. She was anxious to begin her defense at once and to show the others that she had done what was right, and when Maria was missing at supper, and had not appeared at bed-time, she had many apprehensions to quiet and causes for granting consolation, and was forced also to listen to many disagreeable insinuations, but she bore them all patiently, and rejoiced to be able to suffer for her little darling. And on the following morning, after delivering to Johanna Maria's letter, her love and patience were subjected to still severer tests, for the kind, good-hearted woman indulged in abuse against her which a short while ago would have caused her to demand in sharp, angry words her discharge; but she took it all quietly, and it was not until toward midday, when the bishop appeared to conduct the child into a convent, and had grown wrathful over her disappearance, threatened the widow, and declared that he would have search made for the little girl throughout the whole land until she was found that Eudoxia felt that it was now time for her to triumph.

The Greek let the bishop quietly leave the house, and then she let fly her last and best arrow, telling Johanna that she had favored the child's rash act for the purpose of saving her from the cloister. And her newly awakened maternal love gave power to her words, and what she had almost ceased to hope for happened; the warm-hearted little woman, who had yesterday wounded her feelings with such harsh words, threw

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her arms around her tall, slender form, gave her an affectionate kiss, called her a brave, spirited girl, and begged her to forgive her for all she had said and done yesterday.

When Eudoxia retired to rest she felt that she had been growing backward, as it were, and that she had become more like the bright young girl she used to be among her brothers and sisters in her father's house.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OMINOUS EVENTS AT THE HOUSE OF SUSANNAH.

PAULA now knew with what she was threatened. Bishop John it was who had told her of it, but in a most sympathetic manner and with the assurance that he still had the firm hope of being able to prevent the execution of the sinful and heathenish plan; but even without the prelate's interference the condemned girl would have learned what fate awaited her, for daily large crowds would collect before the prison walls, and with loud cries demand a sight of the "Bride of the Nile."

She was often greeted with cries of "All hail!" but when the madmen had shrieked themselves hoarse then they reviled her shamefully.

The cry, "Bride of the Nile!" was heard from morning till night, and the jailer rejoiced that the bishop had relieved him of the painful duty of explaining to Paula the meaning of these ominous words, about which she had already repeatedly asked him. At first this new and horrible danger had terrified and overwhelmed her, but she made every effort to appear calm and even jovial in the presence of her sick father, and to hold fast to the hope that the bishop had held out to her. She succeeded in doing so by day, but when night came on a torturing dread would take possession of her, and she could see herself in her imagination surrounded by crowds of enraged and insane people, dragged to the river, and before thousands of eyes hurled into a liquid grave.

Prayer no longer was of effect, no striving and struggling availed, even the tender love greetings which came to her so often from Orion were powerless; no song that he sung in the short hours of recreation which he allowed himself to his beloved, no word of consolation from the bishop, not even the visits of her friends brought peace and comfort to the poor girl.

The jailer brought these to her as often as it was possible, and among those who found their way to her were Senator Justinus and his wife Martina.

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Fortunately as soon as the bath-slaves of the widow Susannah had been prostrated, and the rumor had reached their ears that the doctor considered their symptoms as the beginning of the plague, the senator and his wife had left the house of their friend and again taken quarters in the hotel of Sostratus, but their nephew Narses, who had just been ransomed from slavery, remained at the house of Catharine's mother.

Heliodora and he had in fact intended to follow them immediately, but just as they were ready to leave the house the plague had already seized upon Susannah, and the authorities had forbidden any one to leave.

Heliodora by herself might perhaps have escaped into the city, but she refused at any price to forsake her unfortunate brother-in-law, for only in her presence did he feel better; he would not permit any one else to nurse him, and he loathed food and drink if any one but she handed it to him. Besides, in his sickness the former dashing cavalry officer had become so touchingly like her deceased husband; she knew that Narses had loved her before his brother had, and had only for his brother's sake kept his passion to himself. Her fondness for nursing found satisfaction, and her anxiety for the young man who, although almost on the brink of the grave, was still not yet beyond all hope, the wish of restoring him to life kept her day and night upon her feet, and caused every other duty to seem to her a secondary and unimportant consideration. Her life had once more received a new impulse, her ambition had won an object that was not unattainable, and she was devoting herself to it body and soul.

Her uncle had told her confidentially that an ardent passion bound Orion to Paula.

It was a painful blow to her, but the Damascus girl had won her respect and admiration, and she was well satisfied at the thought of having been conquered by no less a person.

Although in many a quiet moment she felt a longing for him, she looked upon it as an injustice toward her patient, or as a kind of robbery of his rights.

As to Catharine, Heliodora was, with the exception of her mother, the chief object of her care. The slightest complaint from either of them troubled her beyond description, and whenever Susannah would throw herself upon the sofa, overcome with the heat, or the young widow after a night of anxious watching by the bedside of the sick soldier complained of her old headaches, the young girl grew pale, felt her heart beat with painful vehemence, and in her mind's eye saw them both stricken down with the plague, with throbbing temples and

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those ominous, fearful spots upon their cheeks and foreheads, and as often as the young criminal felt the approach of such fears she could feel the accursed pressure upon that spot of her head where the feverish hand of the sick bishop had lain.

The senator's wife had since Paula's arrest changed her manner toward the little humming-bird in such a marked manner that she appeared to Catharine like a walking reproach, and the young girl would have been happy to see the honored couple leave her mother's house. But they had scarcely left her house when the saddest misfortune entered as guest. The slave who was charged with heating the baths, and to whom the infected garments had been given with orders to burn them kept back a portion of them, and his son had assisted him in the matter, and her nurse, the mother of her foster-brother Anubis, had come into contact with her immediately after her return from the house of the enchantress and from her visit to the bishop. These three had been seized with the plague first. They were removed to the hospital-tents, the nurse and the elder slave as corpses.

But had the terrible plague been banished with them from the house? If not, then it would in turn seize those who had thrown themselves into the arms of the unclean one; first Heliodora, and then her mother!

Properly she ought to precede them, and if the plague seized the others and death were to hurl her into the grave, then in so doing it would simply be showing her mercy. She was still so young, and yet she hated life, since it afforded her nothing but humiliation, disappointment and wounds of poisoned arrows, which from the prison entered her heart and pierced it to the core, and a dread of death which gave her no rest by day or by night.

When the doctor came to remove the sick slaves from the house to the tents in the desert, he informed her by way of news that the judges had sentenced the daughter of Thomas to death, and that both the people and the senate had determined, in spite of the new bishop's opposition, to cast her into the Nile as a sacrifice, in pursuance of an old and revered custom. That the fate of Orion would be determined the following day, but that it would prove the greatest disadvantage to him, in the opinion of the Jacobite judges, that he had selected the Melchite woman for his bride.

Catharine was forced to support herself upon her mother's arm-chair to keep from sinking upon the floor, and with cheeks all aglow she asked the doctor so many questions that he lost

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his patience, and left her in disgust at such an excess of feminine curiosity.

Yes, "the other one" was now known by all to be his bride; but she was his only to die! She felt as if a hot stream were coursing through her veins, and at that thought she could have thrown her arms around the neck of any one she met. A fiendish and fearful joy it was which took possession of her, but even it gave her happiness, precious happiness; she was a blossom of hell, but with brilliant leaves and an intoxicating odor. But her colors dazzled her, and she soon felt a disgust for that perfume. She began to feel horrified at herself, but nevertheless she could have shouted for joy as often as the thought crossed her mind that "the other" must die!

Her mother began to grow anxious about her for fear she too might fall a victim to the plague, for her cheeks glowed so queerly and she was so restless and so strangely excited.

Since Heliodora had received the overwhelming news of Paula's and Orion's engagement with such incomprehensible, although visibly painful equanimity, she became to this emotional, impulsive young girl a weak woman and one unworthy of notice. And on her account she had been guilty of something that looked as much like murder as one pea like another, and had even imperiled her own mother's life! It was a desperate thing to scourge one's self in such a manner.

When Susannah kissed her good-night she complained of a dull pain in her neck, and that her lips were swollen, if she was not mistaken. Catharine seized her, and with trembling lips asked her many questions, took the candle and examined her mouth and searched her face, arms and neck with bated breath for the ominous spots. But she could not succeed in finding any, and Susannah smiled at her uneasiness and called her her precious, thoughtful child, and warned her not to be too anxious about the plague, because anxiety might bring it on.

The young girl could find no sleep that night. Her fiendish joy had vanished, and uneasy reflections and frightful pictures of the imagination tormented her while awake and tortured her still more while dozing.

When dawn began to break, her uneasiness about her mother became so great that she sprung up and ran into her room, but she was sleeping so soundly that she did not even hear her child's footsteps. Catharine was relieved, and withdrew quietly, but the morning brought with it what she had so anxiously feared. Susannah was unable to rise from her bed, had a high fever, and above her lips, the same lips with which she

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had kissed her daughter's poisoned locks, between her nose and mouth appeared actually and undeniably those frightful spots. The doctor appeared and confirmed their fears. The villa was closed by order of the city authorities. The doctor and Susannah, who was in full possession of her faculties, expressed the wish and insisted that Catharine should move into the gardener's house, but she refused with iron stubbornness, and declared that she would rather die than be separated from her mother.

Beside herself, she threw herself upon the sick lady and tried to kiss the red spots upon her mouth, and thus turn the course of the disease from her mother's into her own blood, but the doctor drew her impatiently back, and the patient scolded her with moist eyes, out of which beamed forth the tenderest love.

From now on she was permitted to take charge of her mother. She was assisted by two nuns, who declared to the sick lady and to each other behind the backs of the rich widow, that they had never in their lives seen such an unselfish and affectionate daughter. They spoke of Catharine's behavior in the highest terms to Bishop John also, who did not hesitate to enter the infected houses and speak consolation to their unfortunate inmates; and he, who hitherto had seen in the little humming-bird only a bright and active child, now showed her distinguished consideration, conversed with her as with a grown person, and answered seriously and fully all her questions, which for the most part had reference to Paula. The prelate, full of admiration for the magnanimity of the daughter of Thomas, narrated to the child how, for the purpose of saving her betrothed from death, she had assumed the guilt of a crime which deprived her of every hope of pardon. The Damascus girl was only a Melchite, but to take guilt upon one's self so joyfully out of love for another, was, if anything could be, following in the footsteps of Christ. At these words Catharine shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say: "And do you consider that so extraordinary? Would not the same thing be now quite easy for me to do?"

The prelate perceived this, and in a kind tone warned her against spiritual pride, although she had earned the right to have the utmost confidence in herself, and would not cease to set an example of child-like and Christian love.

With these words he bade her adieu, and Catharine, whom every expression of commendation regarding her behavior toward her mother, whom her crime had laid upon a bed of sickness, aroused like an insult and tormented, again felt as if she

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had deceived another unsuspecting person; but she did not deserve the reproach of spiritual pride, for in that quiet room, upon whose threshold death was now standing, she had repeated to herself again and again all the fearful things she had done, and had declared to herself that she was the chief of all sinners and the most insane of all.

She often felt the impulse to confide her troubles to some other sympathetic heart, and to permit the eye of some other kind person to see and to share her sufferings.

She would, with special delight, have confessed all to the bishop, the most noble of priests, and have submitted to any penance he might have prescribed, the severer the more welcome, but shame at her crime kept her back, but still more definitely and powerfully something else. She knew that the priest would require her to relinquish forever her old manner of life, to pull up by the roots from the soil of her heart her old feelings and desires, and to begin a new life, but the time for that had not yet come; her love was still the condition that determined her life, and her hatred was still too dear to her. Had Paula already fallen a victim to her frightful fate, had she, Catharine, with the old feelings of her heart, been able to prove to Orion that her love for him had not been less ardent, less self-sacrificing than that of Thomas's daughter, had she compelled him, as she must and would do, to acknowledge that he had shamefully betrayed her and had been cruelly unjust toward her, then, and only then would she make peace with herself, with the Church, and her Saviour, and, if it were necessary, would take the veil and spend the rest of her young life as a penitent, in a cloister, or in some lonesome cave.

But now, after Paula, his betrothed, had done for him an act of such great magnanimity, to make an end of her love, unseen, unnoticed, disregarded, perhaps even forgotten by him, to withdraw within herself and out of the range of his notice, was too much to ask or expect of a human being! Rather perish body and soul and fall a victim to eternal damnation, to Satan and hell, in which she believed as firmly as in her own existence.

And so she continued to nurse her mother, saw the red spots increasing in number and spreading over her whole body, saw the fever that convulsed her increasing in violence day by day, hour by hour; she heard too with terror and horrible delight, at which she trembled, but to which she still clung, of the preparations for the sacrifice of the Bride of the Nile; she prevailed upon the bishop to tell her about Paula, about her dying father and Orion; she trembled for little Maria, who had dis-

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appeared from the neighboring house, until she learned that she had ventured forth in order to escape the cloister; she learned every day that Heliodora, who had with her patient removed into the gardener's house, had not yet been seized with the plague; in her prayers, which she now never failed morning or evening to direct toward Heaven, she besought the all-merciful God and her saint to save the young widow from harm, not to make her the murderess of her mother, and to forgive her for having, by her betrayal, caused the death of noble old Rufinus, of whom she had been so fond, and of so many innocent persons.

Thus she passed many frightful days and nights of torture, but the prisoners whom her guilt had condemned to confinement were happier than she, in spite of the horrible fate that threatened them.

The fate of his beloved tortured Orion like hundreds of burning wounds. Paula's horrible end was approaching inevitably, and the mere thought nearly drove him mad.

The jailer, Senator Justinus, and the bishop had informed him that the nuptials of his betrothed had been set for the day after to-morrow. On that day they proposed to adorn his bride with blasphemous hands for an accursed and insane farce, and wed her, not to him, her betrothed husband, whom she loved, but to the Nile, the inanimate and death-bringing river.

He rushed up and down his cell like a madman; he tore asunder the strings of his lute when he attempted to find consolation in music; but then he would hear from the neighboring cell a modest, calm voice, that of Nilus the treasurer, warning him not to give up all hope, to trust in God, and not to forget his work and his duty. And then he became composed, made a powerful effort, and plunged again into his work. He cared not whether it was day or night. The senator had provided him with lamps and oil. When fatigue overcame him he lay down upon his couch only so long as nature peremptorily demanded and slumbered, but as soon as he had shaken off drowsiness he would bury himself again in his plans and tables, write, think, draw, calculate, ponder, and whenever doubts arose, and he did not trust his own judgment and memory, he would strike upon the wall of the adjoining cell, and his prudent, experienced friend was ever ready to lend him assistance according to the best of his knowledge and ability.

The senator drove to Arsinoë for him, for the purpose of securing some facts touching the sea provinces from the records in that city, and so his work advanced, and was now approach

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ing its completion, and it strengthened and raised up his sinking courage, afforded him the joy of success, and caused him sometimes to forget for hours what seemed well adapted to make the bravest despair.

As often as the jailer, the senator, his brave wife Martina, Johanna or even the Greek Eudoxia, to whom Johanna had already twice granted the privilege of accompanying her, visited him, he would give them an oral or written message for Paula, to inform her how far he had progressed with his work, and it afforded her consolation and inward joy to follow him along the path of his labors. Many testimonies of love, respect and admiration encouraged and upheld the imprisoned girl whenever her heart threatened to give way.

Alas, it was not only fear of death that tormented her!

Her father, whom to find again she had regarded as the highest happiness of her life, was beneath her tender care gradually but surely passing away. His poor wounded lungs refused to perform their functions. It was only with the greatest pain and exertion that he could now swallow a few morsels of solid food and a few drops of wine, and his clear, active mind for some days past had seemed mystified. Perhaps it was fortunate for him, she would think to herself, and her friends suggested the same thing by way of consolation.

He, too, had heard the cry, "Hail to the Bride of the Nile!" "Forthwith the Bride of the Nile!" "Down with the Bride of the Nile!" and, although he did not comprehend its meaning, he had occupied himself with it constantly during the last few days, and that strange, peculiar-sounding expression seemed to please him beyond description, for to Paula's discomfort he would mutter it constantly to himself, sometimes tenderly and sometimes thoughtfully.

The poor girl often thought of putting an end to her life before that fearful thing was executed, before she was made a spectacle for a whole people, gazed at by them and treated as an amusing and exhilarating sight, but still one that would arouse both horror and sympathy.

But could she dare do it? Ought she to anticipate the will of the most high God, in whom she had put her trust, and into whose hands she had resigned herself in a thousand mute prayers?

No!

She determined to trust and hope till the last moment, and strange to say, as often as she seemed to be approaching the limit of her power of resistance, and could not possibly hold out longer, but felt compelled to give under, something would

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turn up upon which she could lean with renewed confidence, and which brought her consolation and encouragement; for at that moment a message from Orion would arrive, Johanna or Pulcheria would call upon her, the bishop would request an audience, or her father would recover consciousness and speak noble and encouraging words. Often the jailer would announce the senatorial pair, whose jovial, healthy dispositions always understood how to do and say what was best for her. Mme. Martina especially, with almost a maternal instinct, always touched upon subjects that interested and entertained her, and upon one occasion she showed her a letter from Heliodora, in which she informed the matron how happy she was in nursing her beloved patient, and how grateful she felt that her care and trouble had been rewarded; for Narses had already become quite a different person, and she knew no nobler object than to reconcile this unfortunate man with life and to make him enjoy it once more. She now no longer thought of Orion except as of a fond song that she had once, at a happy moment, heard sung.

Thus the condemned girl's time passed until only two nights more separated her from the festival of Serapis, the day upon which the horrible marriage was to be celebrated.

Toward evening the bishop caused his presence to be announced to Paula. He considered it his duty to inform her that the execution of the sentence had been fixed for the day after to-morrow. He would continue to hope and believe until the end, but his authority over the misguided and deceived multitude seemed to be broken. In any event if the fearful plan of the people were carried into execution he promised to remain by her side in order to protect her as far as possible by the dignity and authority of his robes of office. He had come to-day to devote his time to her and enable her to make all needful preparation. It would be his dearest duty and greatest joy to care for her noble father till his last hour should come.

But however certainly she had looked forward to her frightful fate, this news affected her like a stroke of lightning. That which was now awaiting her seemed so horrible and unparalleled that it would never have been possible to look forward to it with calmness and composure.

For some time she clung to her faithful Betta, having lost all control over herself, and it was only after the lapse of quite awhile that she gradually felt in a condition to talk with the bishop and express to him her gratitude.

But John lamented his inability to lay a just claim to her

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gratitude; for the reply of the patriarch to his complaint against those who had determined to try to save the people by means of a heathenish crime had turned out differently from what he had expected. It was true that the patriarch condemned the atrocious sacrifice, but it was done in such a manner that it lacked all power of terrifying or discouraging the misguided people, but he would see what effect this dispatch would have upon the people, and a number of scribes were at work making copies of it to be ready by the morrow. They would then be distributed to the senators, put up in the market and upon the public buildings, and distributed among the people, but he sorely feared that it would all be in vain.

"Then help me to prepare for death," said Paula, in a tone of intense distress. "You are not a priest of my Church, John, but a worthier servant it could not have. If you in the name of your Saviour will forgive me, then mine will forgive me also. It is true that we look at Him with different eyes, but our Redeemer, He still remains the same."

At these words a spirit of contradiction sprung up within the strict Jacobite, but he succeeded in suppressing it at this hour, and replied:

"Speak, my daughter, I am listening!"

And now she disclosed to him the very depths of her soul, as though he were a shepherd of her own faith, and his eyes filled with tears as he listened to this confession of a pure and affectionate heart, a heart that strove only after that which was highest and best. He vouchsafed to her the forgiveness of her Saviour, and after he had said "Amen" and blessed her he glanced for some moments toward the floor, and at length exclaimed: "Follow me, my child!"

"Whither?" she asked, in a tone of terror, for she thought that her last hour had come and that he was preparing to lead her to the place of execution or to her watery, ever-flowing grave; he, however, smiled and replied:

"No, my child! I am to-day desirous of fulfilling the pleasant duty of asking the blessing of the Most High upon your engagement if you promise me not to try to alienate your betrothed from the faith of his fathers; for what will a man not give up of whom the love for a woman has taken possession! Will you promise? Very well, then, I will conduct you to your Orion."

With these words he knocked upon the door of Orion's cell, and when the jailer opened it he whispered some command to him, and she followed him in silence and with glowing cheeks, and a few moments later she lay upon her beloved's bosom,

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and for the first time and perhaps for the last time in their lives their lips touched.

The prelate left them alone for a short while, and after he had blessed them both and their betrothal he conducted her back to her cell; there she could scarcely find time to thank him out of the fullness of her overflowing heart, for one of the city-guards summoned him to the house of the widow Susannah Her last hour was near, if it had not already come.

Bishop John, without a moment's delay, went with the messenger, and Paula, drawing a deep breath, followed him with her eyes. Then she threw herself upon old Betta's bosom and cried:

"Now let come what may! Nothing can separate us any more, not even death!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

SORROWS AFFECT THE LITTLE HUMMING-BIRD IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER.

THE bishop arrived too late. He found only the corpse of the widow Susannah, and little Catharine sitting at the head of the bed as pale as death, mute, with tearless eyes, looking as though she were undone forever. He attempted in the kindness of his heart to cheer her up and to speak to her words of consolation, but she repelled him, tore herself away from him, and hastened out of the room before he could prevent her.

Poor child!

He had seen many a tender-hearted daughter lament by the death-bed of a departed mother, but such grief as this he had never yet seen. Here, thought he, were two hearts that were to each other everything on earth, and hence this consuming, despairing grief.

Catharine had retreated to her room, thrown herself upon her divan, and had doubled herself up in such a tight ball that no one upon entering the room could have recognized in that shapeless, living mass upon the sofa a human being, a grown girl with all the passionate feelings of youth.

It was very warm, but her body was convulsed by one cold chill after another.

Was she too going to fall a victim to the plague? No, it would have been too merciful a fate to have had such pity upon her sufferings.

Her mother dead, plunged into the grave by her own daughter! The disease had been spread abroad by the touch of her lips, and the doctor had repeatedly expressed his surprise that

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the plague had found its way into this healthy quarter of the town, that had always been spared before, and especially into a house that was kept with such painstaking neatness. She knew whom the destroying angel had followed thither, who had played a criminal trick with him. The word "matricide" entered her brain, and she thought of the laws of her forefathers, which had no punishment for one who murdered their own parents, because the ancients considered such a crime impossible.

Thereupon a smile of derision appeared upon her lips.

Law! Command! Was there one in existence which she had not transgressed? She had despised God, had patronized sorcery, had borne false witness, had murdered, and the only commandment which carried with it a promise and which, if Philippus was well informed, was to be found among the precepts of her ancestors, just exactly as it stood upon the tables of Moses, how had she observed it? Her own mother had lost her life by her instrumentality! Her cold shudders continued while she was subjecting herself to this self-examination, and when she could no longer bear it she began to walk up and down the room and searched eagerly for excuses for her criminal procedure.

She had intended to bring death to Heliodora, and not to her mother. Why had malignant Fate— Here she was interrupted, for the young widow, to whom news of her sad bereavement had been carried, had searched her up in order to console her, and offer to help her in any way she could. She spoke to the young girl in the most affectionate manner, but her soft, sweet-sounding voice reminded Catharine of the hour after the bishop's death, and when Heliodora stretched out her arm to draw her to her she drew back and besought her in a dry, harsh voice not to touch her, for the plague was in her clothes. She needed no consolation; she only desired to be alone, entirely alone and nothing more.

The last words had sounded harsh and unkind, and as the door closed behind the young widow, Catharine glanced after her with an expression full of enmity.

Why had that fatal disease passed this person by and made a victim of one whose loss she could never forget?

And then she began again to think about her mother and hastened into the death chamber, and threw herself down by the bed; but she could not endure it long, so she went out into the garden and searched for every place where she had ever been with her mother. But the bushes made such strange,

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crackling noises, and the trees and shrubs cast such peculiar shadows that she hailed the dawn as a deliverance.

As she was about to return into the house her foster-brother, Anubis, came limping up to meet her.

Poor fellow!

She had made him, too, a cripple, and his mother likewise through her guilt had fallen a victim to the plague.

The boy spoke to her and expressed his sympathy with her, and she seemed gratified, but she said such queer things and gave him such confused answers that he feared that her sorrows had affected her mind. Suddenly, and without further introduction, she asked him how much she was probably worth, and as he knew approximately, by reason of his familiarity with the affairs of the treasury, and informed her of the amount, she clapped her hands together, for how was it possible that one single person who was not a king could possess such wealth? At length she asked him whether he knew how to draw up a will, and he was able to answer her in the affirmative.

He then described the process to her, and added that the signature must be authenticated by witnesses; but that she was too young to think of drawing up her will yet.

"Why?" she inquired. "Is Paula much older than I, do you think?"

"And day after to-morrow," added the boy, "they are going to cast her into the Nile. The people all call her 'the Bride of the Nile.'"

At these words that same ugly, scornful smile played around her lips, but she suppressed it promptly, and hastened straightway into the house.

At the door he inquired of her in embarrassed tones whether he might see his mistress once more; she was compelled, however, to refuse his request on account of the infection, but he replied, proudly:

"What you do not fear will not frighten me either," and followed her to the death-bed where the corpse was now lying in state, and when he saw Catharine kiss the hand of the dead woman, he pressed his lips, while she was not looking, on the same spot that hers had touched. He then took his seat by the bed and remained there until she sent him away.

Before noon the bishop appeared once more and consecrated the deceased. He found her surrounded with flowers of the greatest beauty. Catharine had again been in the garden, had cut the rarest and most beautiful flowers and permitted the gardener to carry them for her in a basket, but she would not suffer him to assist her in picking them. The feeling of being

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able to do at least something for her mother was consoling to her, but her life was more unbearable to her by day than by night. Everything appeared to her so huge, so rough, so irresistible, so threatening, and reminded her of some act of injustice or of some deed of which she was ashamed.

She felt as if every look she encountered saw her through and through, and sometimes it seemed to her as though the columns of the great hall in which the body was now lying vibrated and as if the ceiling was preparing to collapse and crush her to death.

She answered the questions of the bishop in the most absent-minded manner, and often her answers were completely irrelevant, and he thought that she was totally under the influence of her grief, and in order to divert her thoughts into some other channel he talked to her about Paula, and as he thought that Catharine loved her, he told her confidentially that he had conducted Paula to Orion's cell and had there consecrated their betrothal.

At these words her face became so convulsed that it frightened the bishop, and while that fearful battle was going on within her heart her bosom rose and fell rapidly and convulsively, and she was unable to utter one sound but: "But they are going to sacrifice her nevertheless?" The bishop thought he understood her.

She was of course overcome with grief at the sudden and terrible end which awaited this young betrothed bride, and so he regretfully added: "I shall not be able to restrain these atrocious people, but I shall not fail to make the last effort possible. The dispatch of the patriarch, which condemns this mad crime, will be distributed to-day, and I myself propose to proclaim it from the *curia*, explain it, and attempt to give it a sharper sound, and to make every use of it possible. Do you desire to read it?"

In reply to her enthusiastic yes, the prelate made a sign to his acolyte, who had attended him with the sacred utensils, and he drew out of a packet he was carrying a leaf which he handed to her.

As soon as she was alone she read the patriarch's letter, first cursorily without grasping its meaning, then with more composure, and finally attentively, with increasing interest, aroused to active thought, and at last with flashing eyes, bated breath, and as though this letter had reference to her and was to determine her fate.

When the pall-bearers appeared she was still sitting with eyes, as it were, fixed upon the leaf, but now she sprung up, collected

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her thoughts, and bade adieu to the cold, stiff remains of her mother, upon whose warm heart she had so often reposed, and who had been to her the dearest of all earthly objects; but even now the consolation of shedding tears was still denied her. She now no longer felt the deep pangs of conscience that had been torturing her, for she felt as if the intercourse between her mother and herself had not been interrupted by death, and as though after a short separation they would meet again, perhaps quite soon, may be even to-morrow, and with this meeting there would come such an explanation, such a disclosing of hearts, such a representation of all that had happened, so open, so without constraint, as never yet had taken place between mortal beings, not even between mother and daughter; and when the deaf, blind, feelingless departed one shall have seen in heaven with eyes clearer than human eyes, and with the ears and organs of the mind shall have heard, proven, weighed all that had happened to her, all that was wrongfully and unjustly inflicted upon her, all that she had felt, and all that had tried her patience, then, thought she, then she may perhaps censure me and punish me more severely than she ever did upon earth, but she will nevertheless draw me more tenderly to her bosom and seek to grant me deeper comfort.

She then began to whisper into her ear, as though she were alive: "Wait, only wait for me; I am coming soon to meet you, and I will tell you everything!"

She then kissed her so affectionately and with such composure that the nuns withdrew her by force from the corpse, and gave orders to the undertakers to close the coffin. The latter obeyed promptly, and as the wooden lid was fastened over the departed one and noisily adjusted itself to the casket Catharine withdrew her eyes from the sight, and thereupon the dam, which until this time had restrained her tears, broke loose, and she began to weep bitterly, and now for the first time she realized fully that she had lost her mother, that she was a forlorn orphan and all alone in the world.

She no longer saw or heard what was done with the beloved body, for when she again removed her hands from her face, all bathed in tears, the house of the wealthy widow Susannah no longer sheltered its mistress; they had carried her to the nearest pest-house. The law forbade the body to be kept a longer time in the house, and decreed that it should be interred by night. Her own child was not permitted to follow her mother to the cemetery. With head bowed down, Catharine withdrew to her room, and stared out into the garden. All this belonged to her now, and how much more was under her care and con-

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trol, as free and uncontrolled as was her bird, her little dog or her ornaments upon the table. With one word, by a mere wave of the hand, she could now make hundreds happy, but not herself. So well-grown, so independent, so womanly, ay, so strong, and yet at the same time so indescribably miserable and powerless she had never before in the whole course of her life felt herself to be.

To what purpose was all this nonsense? It could not quiet even one gentle sigh!

She had taken leave of her mother with a promise, the burning desire that filled her heart did not cease to arouse her, and now she had received from the patriarch's letter a suggestion as to how she could fulfill the former and silence the latter.

She at once seized the letter again and read it once more.

It began with a strong condemnation of the deed that the misguided Memphians proposed to carry into execution. It then set forth that the violent, world-redeeming death of Jesus Christ had satisfied with the shedding of that divine blood forever Heaven's demand for human sacrifice, and that consequently throughout the wide regions over which the cross casts its benignant shadow human sacrifice must be regarded as a useless and sacrilegious crime. It then further showed how the heathen formed their gods according to the notions of the weak and sinful human beings, and in accordance therewith had provided sacrifice for them.

"But our God," it continued, "stands as high above all that is human as the mind above matter, and the sacrifice that He demands is a sacrifice not of flesh but of the spirit. Would He not turn in sadness and anger from the deluded Christians in Memphis who act and feel in all respects like foolish and cruel heathens? They propose to sacrifice a person of another faith, a stranger, and imagine that this will lessen the crime in the eyes of God; but He will nevertheless spurn it; for the pure and sacred altars of our faith must not be, dare not be befouled with human blood; our religion came to bring life, not death, among men.

"Could—ask your misguided, deluded sheep, my brother, this question—could the Father of love find pleasure in the sight of a child, even though it be an erring one, who, while perishing in the waves, struggles against and curses its murderers?

"If there could be found a pure virgin, filled with the ecstasy of divine love, who voluntarily and according to the example of Him who by His death redeemed the world, would cast herself into the waves and cry to Heaven in tones of religious

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enthusiasm: 'Take me, Lord, and my innocence as a sacrifice, and save my people in this hour of necessity!' ay, that would be a sacrifice, and perhaps the Lord would say: 'I accept it; but the will is already sufficient. Let not one of my children take that life that I have bestowed upon him as the most precious and most sacred gift.'"

The letter closed with pious warnings to the Christains of Memphis.

A virgin that would voluntarily cast herself into the waves in order to save her people from their dire necessity, she, this man of God, out of whose mouth the Most High himself spoke, declared, would be a sacrifice acceptable to Heaven.

This declaration, this hint was like a skein from which Catharine unwound the thread of her thought, growing longer and longer every moment, in order to wind it upon the spinning-wheel and make out of it a useful material.

She wanted to be the virgin whom the patriarch had described, the true and proper bride of the Nile, who would joyfully give her life a sacrifice in order to save her people from their dire necessity.

In this idea there lay an expiation which Heaven could accept; it would free her from the burden of existence which now oppressed her; it would carry her to her mother, and by it she would show her beloved, the bishop, and the world, all the greatness of her self-sacrifice, which was in no respect inferior to that of the much-lauded daughter of Thomas. She desired to execute the great deed before the eyes of her rival, in the presence of all the people. But Orion must know with whose picture engraved upon her heart, and for love of whom she made the leap from life in its full bloom into a watery grave.

Oh, how wonderful, how glorious! Would she not thereby impose upon him inevitably the necessity of remembering her as often even as he thought of Paula? Ay, she would thus compel him to have her picture as the inseparable companion in his heart of "the other," and would not her form by reason of her incomparable deed necessarily grow so prominent in the minds of all men, and in his also, that it would equal in grandeur that of the Damascus beauty? From this moment she longed passionately for the great hour. Her vain little heart laughed for joy at the idea of being seen, praised, and admired by every one. To-morrow she, the little girl, was to stand out conspicuously before all men, and the more intensely the heat of this burning day oppressed her, the more ardently did she, whose passion was bathing, conceive would be the joy of find-

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ing rest from the martyrdom of life in the cool and soothing element. It did not seem to her a difficult undertaking to carry her purpose into execution; she was now mistress, and both officers and slaves must do her bidding.

In addition to all this she thought also of preventing her great riches from falling into the hands of her relations, of whom she was far from being fond, and so she prepared her last will, in which she bequeathed to her uncle Chrysippus a portion of her property, a smaller portion to her foster-brother Anubis and to Rufinus's widow, whom she had to compensate for a cruel wrong. The larger half of her possessions, which were estimated at many millions, she bequeathed and devised to her beloved friend Orion, to whom she forgave everything, and whom she hoped to have shown that there was room in the little humming-bird for something great. She besought him also to accept her house, because he had lost that of his father's not entirely without her guilt.

The condition which she attached to this bequest and devise showed with what an active and watchful mind she had passed through life. She knew that the enmity of the patriarch might be fatal to the young man, and in order to prevent this, and at the same time to secure for herself the intercession of the Church for which she so ardently longed, she obliged Orion to transfer to the patriarch in trust for the Church and benevolent purposes the largest portion of the property bequeathed by her to him; but not all at once, but after the lapse of ten years, and in proportions, the magnitude of which was to be determined according to his, Orion's, own best judgment. In case, however, the son of the Mukaukas were to die within the next three years, then his rights as legatee were to pass to her uncle Chrysippus. She addressed to the Church, to which her heart was wholly and absolutely devoted, the request that it would cause in all the places of worship in the land every year upon the anniversary of St. Catharine prayers to be offered in behalf of her mother and herself. If the patriarch considered her worthy of such honor, she requested that the memorial chapel which she had prescribed should be erected upon the scene of her death should be called the Chapel of Susannah and Catharine.

She emancipated all her slaves, and remembered all the officers of her household in the most liberal manner.

While she was composing, during hours of anxious and painstaking thought these last provisions, she frequently smiled to herself. She then carefully copied the whole, and caused the

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doctor and all the free officers of her house to witness her signature.

Though one would scarcely have accredited the little humming-bird with such foresight, yet no one was surprised at seeing this young heiress, who was imprisoned in an infected house, making prudent disposition of her property, in view of the dangers to which she was exposed, and the doctor even went so far as to conduct the mayor of the city, Alexander, an old friend of her father, who after the death of the Mukaukas had become her guardian, at her special request, to the garden-gate, and he conversed with Catharine, consenting to act as her *kyrios*, and as such to confirm the validity of her will and the authenticity of the signatures, even though she refused to permit him to read the document.

Finally she repaired to the quarters of the slaves, from which again several stricken with the plague had been conveyed to the necropolis, and commanded the boatmen to prepare by the next morning and have in readiness for use the large gala-boat, as she proposed to view the great sacrifice from the boat. She instructed the gardeners how she desired to have the boat decorated, and what flowers she would need for her own use.

She then retired to rest, far less nervous and excited than she had been on the preceding day, and before she had finished her evening prayer the exhausted child had fallen asleep.

When she awoke at sunrise, she found the large and handsome boat, which her father had at an enormous expense caused to be built in Alexandria, manned and ready for service. Without interference she went aboard attended by Anubis and some waiting-maids; for all the policemen and watchmen who had still guarded the house yesterday in the strictest manner, had been ordered to the scene of the great sacrifice and marriage-festival, since a disturbance might easily take place.

CHAPTER L.

THE BRIDE OF THE NILE.

ALREADY during the night numerous spectators had assembled along the banks of the river not far from the inn of Nesptah.

Every moment the crowd increased, and in spite of the intense heat of the morning not a citizen of Memphis could be found at home.

Men, women and children streamed toward the place of festivity, and from the neighboring cities, villages, and oases, thousands came to witness the great sacrifice which was to put

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an end to the calamities of the country. Who had ever heard of such a marriage ceremony? What a blessing, what a favor of Providence to be permitted to witness it!

The senate had not been idle, and had done all in its power to surround it with all possible splendor, and to render participation in the same possible for almost everybody. The festival had been arranged with open-handed generosity and with whole-souled enthusiasm.

Around the harbor of Nesptah wooden stands had been built, in the shape of a large semi-circle, upon which thousands found places to sit or stand.

In the middle of the stand *loges* adorned with carpets and rich hangings had been specially prepared for the members of the senate and their families as well as for the high Arabian officers, and in these *loges* were placed capacious arm-chairs for Wekil Obada, Kahdi, the mayor, old Horus Apollo, as well as for the clergy, although it was well known that they would not attend the festivities.

The common people, who lacked means to purchase seats upon these stands, took up their positions with their wives and children along the banks of the river, and numerous venders came and offered, wherever the crowd was thickest, refreshments and eatables of all descriptions, upon little two-wheeled carts, or upon carpets which they spread out before them. Upon the grand stands the constant cries of the water-carriers were heard, selling filtered water from the Nile and fruit juices. Upon the parched crowns of the palm-trees, where the turtle-doves, larks, and sparrows were wont to assemble the street boys now held sway and whiled away the time by picking the diseased dates from the large but shrunken branches, and hurling them down upon the heads of the curious spectators at their feet, until the guards placed their arrows in position and forbade it.

The chief point of attraction for the eyes of all was the bridge-like wooden structure which was built out into the stream, and from which the Bride of the Nile was to be hurled into the watery arms of her ardent betrothed. Those who were charged with the arrangement of the festal occasion had made a brilliant display of their taste in adorning this structure; for it was decorated in the richest fashion, with carpets and draperies, palm branches and flags, with heavy garlands of tamarisk and willow, from which burst forth an abundance of lotus-blossoms, mallows, lilies, and roses of every shade of brilliancy, with wreaths, the emblems of the nation, and numerous other handsome decorations. The extreme end was the only portion

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of the structure that had been left untouched, in fact it had been left entirely without balustrade, in order not to shut off from the eyes of the spectators even the minutest detail of the marriage ceremony.

In the third hour before noon all were present except those for whom seats had been reserved, but curiosity soon brought them also to the scene of the festivities. The policemen on guard had their hands full to prevent the spectators in the back rows from pushing those in the front rows into the river, and they were not everywhere successful; thanks, however, to the shallow water, no one was injured. In proportion to the danger the cries of those who were exposed to it became fiercer and fiercer. The noise drowned the music of the bands that were stationed upon the grand stand, and the applause, which was heard as often as came in sight old Horus Apollo, who rode hither and thither upon his white ass as fresh and gay as a youth, or one of the higher officers of the city.

At certain points horrible shrieks were heard, and the thickly packed crowds dispersed in every direction with howls and groans. Here some one had fallen a victim to sunstroke, while there another had succumbed to the plague. Those who were fleeing carried others with them; mothers were trying to save their little ones from being crushed to death or from being infected with the disease; the wagon of one vender was upset, while the eggs and cakes of another were trodden under-foot; a whole mass of people were hurled into a deep, half dried-up canal; the policemen brandished their clubs and attempted with loud cries and commands to preserve order, but it seemed to have only momentary effect upon the crowds. Finally there was a sudden and universal silence and the confusion and tumult ceased. It seemed now a matter of indifference whether people were overcome with sunstroke, seized with the plague, or crushed under-foot and killed! The sound of trumpets and of song were heard coming from the direction of the city. The procession, the bridal *cortège* was approaching! Better to perish than to fail to see the minutest detail of this tragedy of tragedies!

Fools, these Arabs!

Of their highest officers only three appeared besides Wekil Obada, and they were unknown.

Even Kahdi was nowhere to be seen; he had, of course, forbidden the Mussulmen women to be spectators of the great event, for not a single veiled beauty from all the harems was to be seen.

Of the Egyptian women not one would have been wanting

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had not many been confined to their houses by the plague. Such an experience could not be had a second time, and what they witnessed to-day might be narrated to their remote descendants. And now the sound of the music and singing came nearer and nearer, but in truth it did not sound as if they were conducting a human being to a barbarous death!

Blast after blast from the trumpets rent the air inviting the people to join in the festal sounds; joyous marriage songs rung out merrily as the procession came nearer and nearer; the high notes of the chorister boys and girls sounded above the deeper and stronger notes of the youths, men and old men; the clear music of flutes was also heard, inducive of festive gayety; the noise of drums like the roaring of the sea became louder and louder as they approached in measured step, and ever and anon the sound of cymbals and the ringing of tambourines, which were being swung, shaken and beaten in festive enthusiasm by maidens could be heard; lute-players lured forth from the strings of their instruments amorous harmonies, and when this powerful stream of manifold sounds had approached quite near new songs and new music could be heard in the distance.

What their ears had perceived was soon confirmed by their eyes.

The eyes and ears of all were now intent upon the Bride of the Nile and her attendants. Every eye seemed forced to direct its glance in the same direction, and now in advance of all appeared the heralds upon fiery chargers, and formed in line along both sides of the road leading to the scene of the marriage. In front of them, upon the left, the choral women, and upon the right the choral men were drawn up, all attired in light green garments richly decorated with lotus flowers. The loose hair of the women, adorned with beautiful white flowers, fell in rich folds over their shoulders; the men carried papyrus and reeds in their hands, personifying the river-gods who had emerged from the waves.

Then appeared young men and bearded forms in white garments with panther-skins over their shoulders, such as the heathen priests used to wear. Two old men with long flowing white beards led the procession, one carrying a silver bowl, the other a golden one in their right hands, prepared to cast them into the waves as a first sacrifice, according to the custom of their fathers, as old Horus Apollo had declared it to be, and recommended for observance. They advanced upon the wooden structure to the extreme end, and arranged themselves at the side of the platform from which the bride was to be wedded to the Nile. They were followed by a large host of flute

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players and drummers, and behind them came fifty more maidens, swinging tambourines, and an equal number of men, all clothed and attired like the followers of Dionysius, Osiris, and Bacchus, who was much worshiped in the time of the Romans, and among them, mounted upon gray and yellow asses, were the drunken Silenas, goat-footed satyrs, and Pan, with his shepherd's flute of many reeds at his mouth.

And then giraffes, elephants, ostriches, antelopes, gazelles, and even tame lions and panthers were paraded before the curious people, for the same thing had been done in the great parade given in honor of Ptolemy the Second, which was described by Callixenus of Rhodes. And then appeared upon a gigantic wagon, drawn by twelve magnificent horses, the symbolic forms of Famine and Plague, fettered and thrown to the ground, together with all manner of howling and blackened children, bound to stakes and with wings on their shoulders and horns on their brows, which were intended to represent tangibly and at the same time in a ridiculous manner the inmates of hell.

Upon another wagon was to be seen the Goddess of Plenty. She was surrounded by sheaves, fruits and bunches of grapes, and was attended by boys and girls bearing fruits and cereals, pomegranates and clusters of dates, wine-pitchers and wine-glasses in their hands.

Next came a shell drawn by eight snow-white steeds, in which reposed the Goddess of Health, as though she were in the bath, bearing in one hand a golden bowl and in the other a serpent-rod, and then came the future spouse of the Bride of the Nile, the river-god, after the famous statue which the Romans carried away from Alexandria: the magnificent, powerful and bearded form of a man, the upper part of whose body rested upon a gigantic urn. Sixteen naked children, the sixteen ells which the stream must rise if it were going to bring upon the land the blessing it desired, were playing around his herculean body, and a large wedding-crown of lotus flowers adorned his flowing locks.

Crocodiles, sheaves of wheat, dates, clusters of grapes and shells covered in abundance this wagon, which was greeted with huzzas and cheers by the multitude. It was surrounded by old gray-haired men dressed in the garb of heathen priests.

This was in turn followed by bands of music and choirs, and in front of them marched a host of youths and maidens. They, too, were dressed as male and female geniuses of the stream, and represented the companions of the bride and bridegroom, the wedding escort of the betrothed.

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The further the procession advanced, and the nearer the anxiously awaited victim approached the more attentively did the crowd gaze and listen.

After the youths and maidens had passed by scarcely a sound was to be heard upon the stands or among the people. No one noticed the burning heat of the day, no one observed the dryness of his parched tongue, the eyes of all were fixed in the same direction, the negro Wekil alone, whose gigantic figure, drawn up to its full height, was standing in its place, turned now and then with lurking, attentive gaze toward the city. He expected to see smoke rising from the neighborhood of the prison, and suddenly his lips parted, and with a scornful smile he displayed his glittering, snow-white teeth.

That which he had been expecting at last appeared, and the little gray cloud that he saw soon grew blacker, and in the midst of it appeared a reddish glow, which did not owe its origin to the sun. But among the thousands present he was the only one who glanced backward and saw it.

Now the wedding procession began to march upon the wooden structure standing out in the river, and another choir of young men, with panther-skins on their shoulders, followed, and then—at last, at last—there approached a wagon drawn by eight coal-black steers, decorated with green ostrich feathers and water-plants.

The wagon was protected from the heat of the sun by a wide-spreading canopy, upon the supports of which were leaning four men in the attire of heathen priests, and beneath this canopy, all richly adorned with lotus blossoms and bundles of reeds, reposed the Bride of the Nile, surrounded with green papyrus, reed-grass, tall rushes and blooming water-plants.

She sat motionless, clothed in white, and thickly veiled. Her long, full brown hair flowed loosely down over her shoulders, and before her lay a wreath and some rare lotus blossoms of roseate hue.

Near her side the bishop had been seated up to the present moment, the first Christian minister among all those with whom Memphis was filled to overflowing who had made his appearance at the scene of this heathenish barbarism.

Now he raised himself up erect, and with brow darkly contracted and ominous glance, he gazed upon the multitude. Of what avail had been the penitential sermons in all the churches, the warnings and threats proclaimed by himself and all the clergy? In spite of all opposition he had ascended the wagon with the condemned girl after having once more comforted

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her soul. It might cost him his life, but he determined to keep his promise.

Orion's last greeting, a rose Mme. Martina had brought him, and another one, which Pulcheria had handed her early that morning, Paula carried in her hand.

Yesterday, during a lucid interval, her father had given her his dying blessing without having the faintest suspicion of what was in store for her; he had not come to himself to-day, and so neither felt nor responded to the parting kiss of his child.

He was carried in a state of unconsciousness from the prison to the house of Rufinus. Johanna had strenuously insisted upon taking him and nursing him to the end.

Orion's last greeting, in writing, was delivered to Paula shortly before she started upon her last journey, and contained the news that his work had been completed. He had been informed that the awful tragedy would be executed not to-day but to-morrow, and she received consolation from the reflection that he was spared the torture of accompanying her in mind upon her frightful trip.

She allowed the women who had come to put on her bridal garments to have their own way, and among them was Eman, the wife of the jailer, whose tearful sympathy gave relief to her heart. But before she had proceeded further than the prison court she felt that she could not endure exhibiting herself to the gaping multitude in the floral ornaments of a bride, so on the wagon she tore them off and threw them on the ground.

The road to the river seemed to her so long, so endlessly long, but she did not once glance at the curious spectators along the street, did not cease to lift up her heart in prayer, and when her proud blood boiled up and despair seemed about to overpower her she grasped the bishop's hand, and he did not grow weary in encouraging her and in adjuring her to persevere, in love and faith, and not to suffer her hope to wane.

And thus they arrived at the end of the structure, where life in another world began for her. The cries of the multitude had not yet sounded so loud, so enthusiastic, so expectant; music and singing were mixed indiscriminately with the roaring of the thousands of people, and, as though stupefied, she allowed herself to be raised from the wagon, and followed the youths and maidens who represented her bridal attendants, and in alternating choruses sung one of the grandest wedding songs of Sappho of Lesbos.

And now the bishop attempted to address the multitude, but he was promptly silenced. He then joined her again, and she stepped upon the bridge supported by his hand.

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All that she possessed of strength, pride, and heroism she summoned to her assistance in order to take these last few steps erect and without wavering, and she had already reached the middle of the bridge in a princely manner, and as majestically as though she were advancing thither to demand obedience from this mass of people, when the sound of hoofs were heard upon the hollow planks behind her.

Old Horus Apollo had overtaken her, upon his white ass, and placed himself directly in her way.

Out of breath, covered with perspiration, he commanded her, in a scornful and triumphant manner, to unveil her countenance, and ordered the bishop to withdraw, and to permit the person who represented Father Nile to take his place at her side. This man was a gigantic blacksmith, who followed old Horus, and who, though somewhat embarrassed in his masquerade, was nevertheless willing to carry his part out to the best of his ability.

But the priest and Paula refused to obey these commands.

Thereupon the old man tore the veil from her face, and made a sign to the "Nile-god," and he took advantage of his right, and, after bowing humbly before the bishop, who was compelled to let him have his way, escorted her to the extreme end of the bridge. At this point the two old men who had preceded the attendants of Osiris and Bacchus, cast the golden bowls as a sacrifice into the river, and then a lawyer, who was attired like a heathen priest, in a well-rounded speech began to explain the significance of this marriage and sacrifice.

He then seized Paula's hand, in order to place it in that of the blacksmith, and he prepared to cast her into the arms of the river whose representative he was.

But he was prevented from executing his purpose. A large gala-boat had moved up close to the bridge, and now cries and yells arose from the grand stands and along the shores, though up to this time every soul had looked and listened in breathless suspense.

"The gala-boat of Susannah!"

"Look on the Nile, on the river!"

"The humming-bird, the daughter of the wealthy Philammon!"

"A beautiful sight!"

"A second, another bride of the Nile!"

And now the eyes of all were turned from Paula to Catharine. The beautiful gala boat of the widow Susannah had for an hour been plying up and down in front of the bridge, and the guards had already repeatedly warned the boatmen to keep

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at a greater distance from the scene of the marriage but without effect, as it was impossible, from their little skiffs, to use force against a gigantic boat rowed by fifty sailors.

And now it had approached quite near to the bridge, and with its richly gilded woodwork, with its cabin supported upon tall silver columns, its sails embroidered with purple, it would have offered a brilliant and pleasing sight to the eye, had not the large black flag upon its mast lent it in spite of all an earnest, sad appearance.

Catharine had caused her maids to array her in the cabin in white garments, and to adorn her with white blossoms, myrtles, roses and lotus in profusion, and had refused to answer all their questions while they were engaged in doing so.

The maid who pinned the flowers upon her breast felt her mistress's heart beat beneath her fingers, and the lotus flower, which drooped from her shoulder upon her bosom, rose and sunk as if it already lay upon the restless stream. Her lips also were in constant motion, and her cheeks were as pale as death.

"What is she going to do?" her attendants asked themselves.

Her mother had died yesterday, and to-day she was witnessing this tragic scene, and even commanded the pilot to move toward the bridge and stop quite near it, where she would be seen by everybody. But perhaps it was her wish to show herself in all her magnificence to the assembled multitude, and to be admired by all, for now she was preparing to mount upon the top of the cabin. And she did look lovely, as beautiful as an innocent angel, as she climbed up the stairway, with childlike embarrassment and modesty, and yet with eyes wide open, as though she were expecting something grand for which she had long and earnestly been pining.

Anubis had to support her when she reached the last step, for her knees threatened to give way beneath her; but when she had reached the top she sent him back with instructions to keep the rest of her attendants below because she desired to be alone.

Accustomed to obey, the boy acquiesced, and now Catharine ascended a bench standing near the balustrade of the boat, turned toward Paula, whom she was approaching nearer and nearer every moment, extended toward her and the bishop her right hand, in which she was holding two gorgeous lilies, and at the moment when the blacksmith measured with his eye the space between the bridge and the boat, and saw that it was im-

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possible to cast the Bride of the Nile into the waves until the boat withdrew a little from the bridge, Catharine exclaimed:

"Reverend Father John, and you, my people! I, I, and not the daughter of Thomas! Not she, I, I, Catharine, am the true Bride of the Nile! Of my own free will—hear me, John!—of my own free will do I give my life for my people and their suffering, and the patriarch has said my sacrifice will be acceptable to Heaven. Farewell! Pray for me! Pity me, my precious Saviour! Mother, beloved mother, I am coming!"

Then she called out to the pilot: "Pull off from the bridge!" and as soon as a few strokes of the oars had driven the boat deeper into the stream, she ascended with trembling step the railing of the boat, then cast the lilies into the water, and then with her head slightly turned to one side and with a smile upon her lips, she modestly gathered her garments about her and sunk beneath the waves.

The water closed over her, but soon the accomplished swimmer again appeared upon the surface, and her features had the appearance of one bathing and enjoying the soothing coolness of the water that seemed to ripple around her and cajole her. Perhaps the mad storm of applause still touched her ear, and perhaps, too, she heard the cries of terror, sympathy, and gratitude that arose from the countless thousands along the shore, but soon she again disappeared head foremost beneath the surface.

The "river-god," a kind-hearted person, who in ordinary every-day life could never have seen his neighbor perish before his eyes, released Paula, forgetting the part he was playing, and leaped into the water after Catharine, as did also her foster-brother Anubis and some of the sailors, but they could not find her, and the boy, whose broken leg proved to be an incumbrance in swimming, followed even in death her to whom in life his whole heart had belonged.

Her words had been heard only by those to whom they were addressed, but before she had disappeared in the waves, Bishop John turned toward the people, held Paula firmly with one hand, now that she had been released from her repulsive bridegroom, and waved aloft a crucifix in the other, and cried aloud to the multitude:

"The will of our most holy father Benjamin, through whom God himself has spoken to you, has been accomplished. Of her own zealous accord a pure and noble Jacobite maiden has offered herself in imitation of our Saviour a sacrifice before your eyes for her suffering fellow-mortals. This young girl here,"

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and at these words he drew Paula to him, "is now free; the Nile has received its victim!"

But before he had finished speaking, and the people had found time to hear her words, old Horus Apollo had rushed upon him and interrupted his speech. During the ceremony he had already dismounted from his ass, and in order not to let his victim escape him he now threw himself between Paula and the bishop, seized her by her dress, and called aloud to the young men of the chorus:

"To work! Let some one quickly take the place of the river-god— And then into the stream with the Bride of the Nile!"

But the bishop once more forced his way between the young girl and the old man, whereupon anger overpowered him, and he rushed upon the priest, in order to tear from him the image of the crucified One; but the bishop cried aloud in a voice of thunder that sent terror to the hearts of all that heard it: "Anathema!" At the sound of this terrible word, and at the sight of this sacrilegious attack, the Christian blood of the Egyptians was aroused, and their fidelity to the faith, which had been proved in many a battle, and which during this time of terror had only by artificial subterfuges been thrust into the background, again began to assert itself, and the leader of the chorus dragged back the old man and took sides with the prelate. Others followed his example, while a number of young choristers lent their assistance to the old man, who still held Paula with the grasp of despair, preferring himself to be blotted out of existence rather than see the hated woman escape his revenge.

But now there could be heard from the deserted city the sound of bells and an inexplicably ominous noise, and suddenly a youth was seen, with unsheathed sword in hand, forcing his way through the crowd, and in spite of his torn garments, his disordered hair and blackened face the majority of the people recognized in him Orion.

Everything gave way before him, who rushed forward like a raving maniac, and when he reached the bridge, and with rapid glance perceived how far the tragedy had advanced, he plunged forward with mighty bounds through the masked spectators upon the bridge, pushing struggling groups of people violently aside, and before his approach had been observed by those on the remote end of the structure he dragged the old man back from Paula, and called her by name, and as she, powerless from terror, surprise and indescribable ecstasy sunk back upon his breast, he pressed her to him with his left arm, and the glitter-

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ing sword in his right hand and his flashing eyes taught every one it would be as prudent to attack a lioness that was defending her young as this desperate man who was ready to die for his beloved betrothed.

His thrust had hurled Horus Apollo far to one side, and as the old man was recovering himself, in order to throw himself once more upon his victim, he became entangled in a crowd, and was hurled with them over the edge of the bridge into the water by the wild and excited multitude that had followed Orion.

The most of these unfortunate people were able to save themselves by swimming, but old Horus sunk, and only his fist, raised aloft in the air in a defiant manner, was seen for a few moments above the surface of the water.

In the meantime Wekil had also observed what was going on upon the bridge, and he sprung up from his seat in a rage, intending to restore order and to arrest with his own hand Orion, whom he thought he recognized, or if necessary to smite him to the ground.

But thousands impeded his way, for the released prisoners, at whose head Orion had appeared, had rushed upon the scene of the festivities, scattering terror on all sides with the cry of:

"Fire! The prison! the city is in flames!" and now every one who could use his legs was madly hastening thence to the city, in order to rescue from destruction his house, his property, and his loved ones.

The spectators began their flight like a flock of pigeons, which the cry of a hawk has scattered, or like a heap of dried autumn leaves driven by a whirlwind. They directed their steps toward the city in wild confusion and dismay, leaped upon the wagons that had been used in the parade, cut loose the steeds from the equipage of the Goddess of Health, and rode toward the town at a mad gallop, treading under-foot whatever happened to lie in their way, and in their wild rush they tore Wekil along with them, who, with saber in hand, was striving to reach the bridge.

Smoke and fire in the meantime continued to ascend from the city toward heaven, and seemed with magic power to impel the fleeing multitude to make almost supernatural efforts to reach their homes before it should be too late.

But before the negro could reach the wooden structure the hastening crowd was brought to bay; the sound of approaching hoofs was heard. The thick clouds of dust concealed both horse and rider, but it must be armed horsemen who were approaching at such a furious pace, for through the gray cloud

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that enveloped them there burst ever and anon glittering flashes of light, the reflection of the rays of the sun from the bright and polished surfaces of helmets, shields and sabers. And now the negro also recognized them.

In advance of the rest dashed Kahdi, and just as Wekil reached him he swung himself from his saddle upon the bridge, and with a loud cry of, "Saved, delivered!" in which was reflected the intense joy of his heart, he extended his hands to Paula, who, clinging to Orion, was now approaching the shore. All this time Othman had not observed Wekil, who was only a few paces from him. The words "Saved, delivered!" from the mouth of the highest judge of the land taught the negro that the royal pardon of his young and hated enemy must have arrived, and this contained the sentence of condemnation for himself.

He had nothing more to hope. Omar was still to rule; the attempt upon the life of the caliph had failed. Degradation, punishment, death awaited him so soon as Amr should return; but he did not wish to perish before he had drawn with him to destruction the originator of his ruin, and so he thrust back the surprised Kahdi and prepared for the terrible stroke of felling Orion to the ground before he himself had fallen. But the captain of the body-guards, who had followed Othman, had anticipated Wekil's design, and with the quickness of lightning he struck the negro a blow from his saddle that cleaved his head to his neck. With a horrible oath Obada let his arm fall to his side and fell expiring at the feet of the newly united couple.

The people declared later that his blood was not red like human blood, but was black like his body and his soul.

They had ground to curse him, for by reason of his fiendish cruelty more than the half of Memphis had this day been destroyed and its citizens reduced to abject poverty.

Two hired felons, whom he had secured during the festive ceremonies, set fire to the prison for the purpose of burning Orion alive, but the fire had been discovered in time and the whole host of prisoners set at liberty. And it was thus that the young man at the head of his fellow-prisoners had been able to reach the scene of the sacrifice; but in the deserted town it had been impossible to stay the flames, which were transmitted from house to house along the parched streets, and on the following day there was nothing left of the famous City of the Pyramids but the Nile Street situated along the river bank and a few miserable alleys.

The ancient residence of the Pharaohs had been transformed

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into a mere spot upon the soil of Egypt, and its homeless citizens migrated to the other side of the river, and settled as Mussulmen in the rapidly growing Fostat, or sought new homes upon Christian soil.

Among the houses that had been spared was that of Rufinus, and thither Kahdi conducted Paula and Orion, and assigned it to them as their prison until the return of the commander, and here, united with their friends, they spent happy days together; there it was permitted the dying hero Thomas for the last time to draw his children to his bosom and bless them.

Shortly before Kahdi appeared upon the scene of the festivities two carrier-pigeons arrived, both bringing orders from Amr the commander to prevent, at all hazards, the sacrifice of the daughter of Thomas, and to spare her life until his return. He also proposed to decide Orion's fate at the same time.

Maria and Hassan had found him at Berenice, upon the Egyptian shore of the Red Sea. This dilapidated port was connected with Medina by a carrier-pigeon service, and in reply to his inquiry touching the proposed sacrifice on the bank of the Nile by the despairing Egyptians Omar had sent orders that were forthwith forwarded to Kahdi.

The conflagration of the city brought new calamities upon the sorely afflicted Memphians, and in spite of Catharine's sacrifice the Nile refused to overflow. And so three days after the interruption of the marriage ceremonies, Kahdi called together all the inhabitants of the cities on both sides of the stream once more beneath the palms of Nesptah's inn, and here he proclaimed through Arabian criers and Egyptian interpreters to both Mussulmen and Christians what the caliph had commanded him to make known to the citizens of Memphis: The only and all-gracious God despises human sacrifice. Confident of this he would pray to Allah, the all-merciful, and he, Omar, had inclosed therewith a letter, which was to be cast into the river in his name.

And this letter bore the superscription: "To the Egyptian Nile!" And its contents were as follows:

"If thou, oh stream, flowest by thine own power, then do not overflow; but if it be the true and only God who causes thee to flow, then we implore this merciful God to cause thee to overflow'"

"What does not proceed from God," said the commander, in the letter which accompanied that of Omar, "can not avail

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man, 'tis certain. But everything was created by Him, and so, too, your noble stream. The Most High will hear the earnest prayer of Omar, as well as our own, and hence I decree that all you Mussulmen, Christians and Jews assemble yourselves together in the mosque on yonder side of the river, which I built in honor of the all-gracious One, and that ye do lift up your hearts in one great, common prayer that God may hearken unto you and have mercy upon your woes!"

And Kahdi summoned all the people to march across the Nile, and they obeyed him. The bishop called upon his priests to follow, and he led forth the Christians, marching at their head; then followed the rabbis and the oldest among the Jews, with their people, and the Mussulmen gathered together with them in the magnificent mosque of Amr with its grand columns, and there all three sects lifted up their hearts, eyes and voices to the one and only all-merciful Father in heaven.

And this very mosque of Amr has more than once witnessed a similar ennobling spectacle, and in the life-time and before the very eyes of the writer of this narrative were Mussulmen, Christians and Jews called together there to offer up a pious petition, which was assuredly heard graciously by the Almighty Father of them all.

And soon after the caliph's letter had been cast into the Nile, and the prayer of the three different sects had been offered up in Amr's mosque, a carrier-pigeon arrived in Memphis with the news that the Nile was rapidly rising in the neighborhood of the cataract, and after a series of sorrowful yet hopeful days the Nile began to swell and continued to rise higher and higher, soon breaking over its banks, until the farmers had full ground for expecting a glorious harvest, and after a thunder-storm had dispelled the choking dust the pestilence also disappeared.

At the same time that the river showed the first signs of rising, the commander Amr returned home, and in his retinue appeared little Maria and Hassan, as well as Philippus and the merchant Haschim, who had joined the party of the caliph's vicegerent at Dschidda. They had learned on the road all that had taken place at Memphis, and as the travelers, with the pyramids before their eyes, were nearing their last night's encampment, the Arabian general exclaimed to Maria:

"What think you, my darling? In spite of all that has happened we nevertheless owe the citizens of Memphis a gorgeous marriage festival."

"No, sire, two of them," replied the child.

"How can that be?" inquired Amr, laughing. "As you

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are still too young and consequently can not be reckoned as one of them. I know no maiden in Memphis whose marriage I would like to provide for."

"But I should like to arrange the marriage of a man to whom you will deny no boon, and who lives as secludedly as a hermit, and at the same time with Paula and Orion: I refer to our good Philippus there behind us."

"The doctor? And is he still single?" inquired the general, astonished, for no Mussulman at his age and in his position of physician could have led an unmarried life without exposing himself to the contempt of his fellows.

"Ah, he is a widower!"

"No, sire," rejoined Maria. "He has simply not yet found a wife that suits him; but I know one whom God himself created especially for him."

"My little Chatbe!"* exclaimed the general. "Do you make your arrangements, and it shall not be my fault if the second marriage is not celebrated in the grandest style."

"There is one more we must celebrate!" said the child, laughing and clapping her hands. "My brave protector—"

"The giant! Nothing is impossible for you, my little one; have you found a bride for him also?"

"No, sire; he found his Mandana without my help."

"It's all the same," exclaimed the general. "I shall provide for her! But let this be enough, otherwise these numerous families we are founding might eventually expel us Arabians from the country."

It was upon such terms of intimacy that the great general had dealt with this child since she had entered his tent at Berenice and had there pleaded for the interests of her beloved friends with such fluency, such clearness, and with so much feeling that Amr had forthwith determined to do everything for her that lay in his power.

In addition to other considerations, by the news she had brought, Maria had rendered it possible for him to prevent transactions that would have worked the greatest injury to the cause of the crescent, and to rescue from death the children of two fathers whom he admired, the son of the George the Mukaukas, and the daughter of Thomas.

Upon his return he ascertained that the crimes Wekil had committed far exceeded his worst fears. The negro had begun to undermine that respect for the Arabian government and for the justice of the Mussulmen which he had zealously striven to

* The Arabian word for a woman that negotiates marriages.

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place upon a firm foundation, and it was as though by a miracle that Orion had escaped his murderous attempts, for thrice had he dispatched assassins into the prison, and he owed it solely to the watchfulness of the husband of the beautiful Eman that he had escaped from the burning prison. It was of the most momentous importance to Obada to rid himself of the detested young man, since his testimony and accusations might ruin him. The felon had met with a more appropriate fate than the judges would have inflicted upon him. The riches which were found stored up in his house were forwarded to Medina, and Orion was compelled to bow submissively to the decree that the money and effects that the negro had taken from his treasury and sent thither should remain in the possession of the Arabs. The commander considered it his duty to impose this punishment upon the young man for the part he had taken in the rescue of the nuns with its fatal consequences, and Orion acquiesced willingly, since it restored to his beloved and himself their freedom, and enabled the commander to devote the greater part of the revenue of the land to internal improvements.

But the caliph Omar was not permitted to receive this wealth, which amounted to much more than the half of all the possessions of George the Mukaukas.

The most faithful friend of the prophet, the wise and powerful ruler, had fallen a victim to assassination, and now it came to light that Wekil had been a party to the conspiracy and, emboldened by confidence in its success, had been guilty of all these incredible crimes.

Amr greeted the son of the Mukaukas as a father, and upon examination of his work he found that it was far superior to the other plans which he had caused to be prepared, and so he entrusted Orion with the carrying into execution of the new subdivision of the land which had been worked out by himself down to the minutest details.

"Do your duty and apply all your powers to your work in the future as you have begun!" exclaimed Amr to the youth, and he responded:

"During this sorrowful yet happy period I have gained knowledge of a great many things."

"And may I inquire of what?" asked the general. "I shall listen to you with interest."

"I have learned, sire, that happiness and misfortune as generally understood do not exist. Life is simply what we ourselves make it. Misfortunes which force their way into our lives from without are often merely the transient night upon

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which follows a glorious day, or the wounds of the surgeon, that make us sounder than ever before. What men generally call misfortunes are frequently only a bridge to a more exalted existence; but happiness in the sense of the masses leads like a swift-flowing river forth from this ennobling existence. Just as a ship that has lost its rudder is more apt to outlast a storm when upon the high seas than when near to the shores of safety, so a human being who has been lost recovers life and true happiness oftentimes amid the wildest uproar of life's ocean with comparative ease, but only with the greatest difficulty and rarely when his life flows gently on. All other blessings lose their value when conscience does not urge us on to meet the duties of life with firmness and fidelity, and to apply ourselves with joy to the obligation that it imposes upon us. The lost man was saved as soon as he had devoted his body and mind to the service of nobler duties, having God before his eyes and within his heart. My own experiences and the friends of my Paula have taught me to strive after that which is right, and to seek my own happiness in the happiness of others. The feeling of lost freedom is hard to bear, but give me love and grant me opportunity and space to apply my strength in the service of the public, and even in prison I shall be happy; not perfectly happy, for without freedom there can be no perfect happiness, but yet happier than the idle, useless spendthrift of time and strength that I used to be amid the gay pleasures of the capital."

"Then enjoy in addition to love and freedom the consciousness of duty faithfully performed," rejoined the commander, "and your Father in heaven, believe me, my friend, will vouchsafe to you as joyfully as I all that is noblest and best. You are upon the road that will transform that curse into a blessing."

* * * * * * *

The three weddings which the commander had promised Maria to arrange were celebrated with all possible magnificence.

The wedding of Paula and Orion was an occasion never to be forgotten by the guests who witnessed it. Bishop John consecrated their union, and they took possession of the magnificent house of little Catharine, which she had devised to the young bridegroom, and had it been permitted her to read the hearts of Paula and Orion and to know how they held her in memory, she would have found that she was to them no longer the childish little humming-bird, and that they well knew

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what gratitude they ought to feel toward her for the sacrifice of her young life.

Little Maria was the first dear guest that they received in their new home, and she remained its beloved inmate until she was happily married.

The governess Eudoxia, whom Orion had taken under his protection, followed Maria into her own charming home, where she closed her eyes in peace, having in the education of Maria's children shown herself no longer a mere hireling but a veritable mother.

The patriarch Benjamin, who was prevailed upon by many circumstances, and to no small extent by Catharine's will, to remain upon friendly terms with the son of the Mukaukas, also appeared as a guest of the youthful pair. Neither he nor the Church had any cause to regret their treaty of peace with Orion, and when Paula presented her beloved husband with a boy, the ecclesiastical prince of his own accord offered to perform the part of godfather for the child and named him after his grandfather, George.

Orion's son inherited the dignity of Mukaukas upon his arriving at manhood, since his father had been intrusted with the high office under a new Arabian title shortly after his marriage.

As the highest Christian officer of his fatherland, Orion was soon compelled to transfer his residence from Memphis, which had now been given over to ruin, to Alexandria. Thence his official authority was exercised throughout the entire valley of the Nile, and he devoted himself to his duties with so much zeal, with such faithfulness, justice, and prudence, that his name was held in honor and esteem by remote generations.

Paula was the joy and the pride of his existence, and remained lovingly united to him till extreme old age.

Among the most sacred duties of his life he accounted the aim to make the life of his wife, who had changed him from a lost and accursed man to what he now was, happier from day to day. Upon the newly repaired palace of his forefathers in the port city of the Nile he placed this inscription, which had adorned the ring of Thomas:

"Before virtue God has placed toil."

The doctor and Pulcheria also found a new home in Alexandria. Philippus did not have to woo her long; for when his darling girl, of whom he had constantly been thinking during his absence, for the first time met him after his return home in her mother's house and extended to him both hands in a confiding, trusting manner, he drew her to his breast and would

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not let his Pul go until Johanna had granted them both her maternal blessing. The widow lived at the home of the doctor, with her children and grandchildren, and paid frequent visits to the grave of her husband. Finally she too was buried by his side in the cemetery of the port city.

Hassan, upon whom Orion bestowed ample means, became a famous raiser of horses and camels in the land of his birth, and Mandana managed his domestic affairs upon his estates gently and yet economically, and although her husband remained till the last day of his life a Masdakite, he never divided his possessions with any one.

The first girl that his wife presented him with he called Maria, his first boy was named Haschim; she would not agree to Hassan's proposition to call the second boy Orion; she preferred to call him Rufinus, and the next two she called respectively Hassan and Philippus.

The senatorial couple left Egypt with hearts full of content.

Martina had, after all, had the satisfaction of assisting in celebrating the wedding of Heliodora on the banks of the Nile, although the bridegroom was not her "great Sesostris," but her nephew Narses, who under the loving care of the young widow had regained although not complete health, still an endurable state of health.

The young bride received as Paula's present the fatal emerald which in the meantime had been brought back to Memphis. The senatorial pair and the Mukaukas Orion, with his wife, were united by the closest ties of friendship until the end of their lives; the treasurer Nilus long managed the affairs of his office with diligence and care, and as often as the merchant Haschim came to Alexandria there was a friendly contest between Orion and Philippus; for neither was willing to give him up to the other.

The doctor no longer begrudged his former rival his proud bride. True, he did not cease to admire her, but still he thought: "My noble Pul has not her equal on earth; our rooms would have been too small for Paula, but they just suit my little Golden Locks."

To the end of his days he remained a self-sacrificing follower of his profession, and when he saw Orion wearing himself out by his severe application to his duties, he would often say: "He knows now what life demands, and acts accordingly, and for this reason he does not grow older, and his laugh continues so attractive and joyous. It is a great honor to be able to call yourself the friend of one who, like 'the Bride of the Nile,'

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was rescued from certain death, and of another who was saved from the most terrible of all curses, like the young Mukaukas."

Until the present day "the Bride of the Nile" has never been forgotten for, upon the night before the stream is expected to rise, at Cairo, the city which occupies the site of ancient Memphis, on the opposite side of the river from Fostat that was founded by Amr, every year its citizens set up on the banks of the stream a clay figure bearing the form of a woman, and they call it "Aruse," that is, "The Bride."

THE END.

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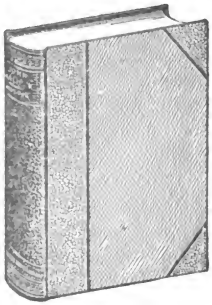

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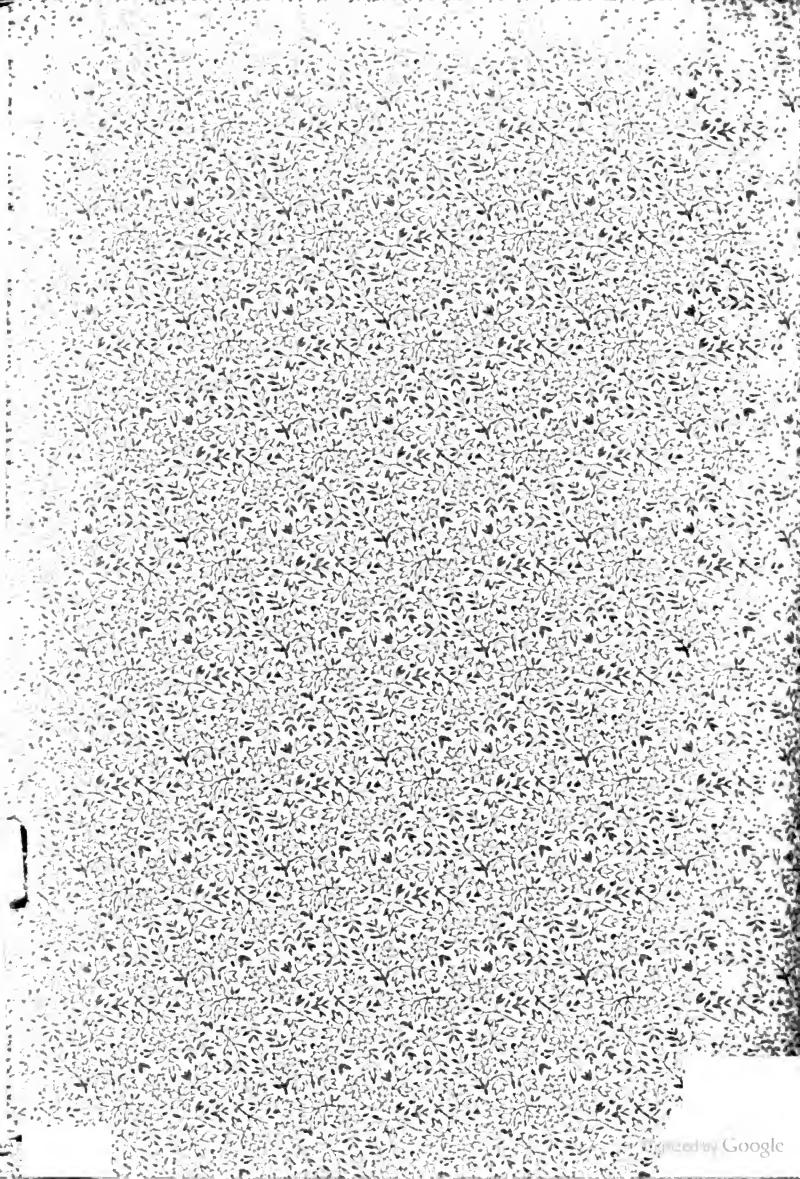
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